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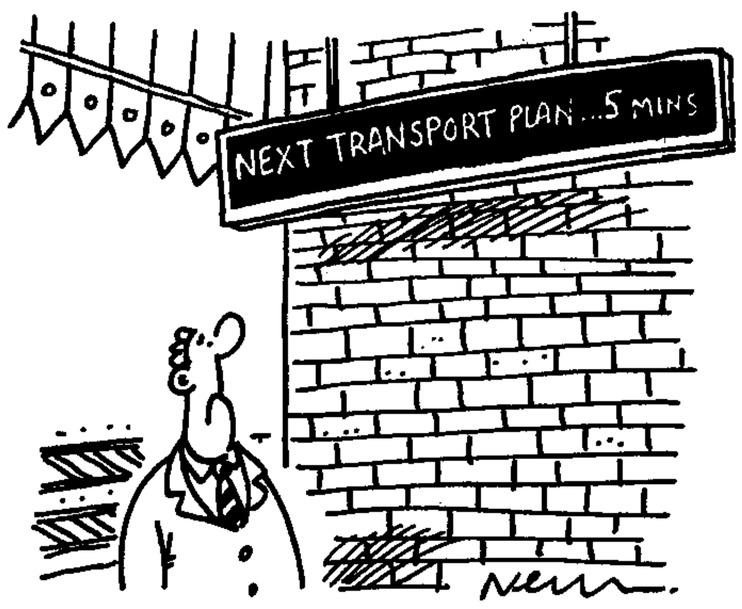

- *Red faces over Red Ken; the euro countdown 6*
- *Court Circular: Flunkey on Camilla 7*
- *After Potters Bar: Focus on Jarvis 10*
- *Would jubilee it! Royal books special 24, 25*
- *Another day, another donor: John Ritblat 26*

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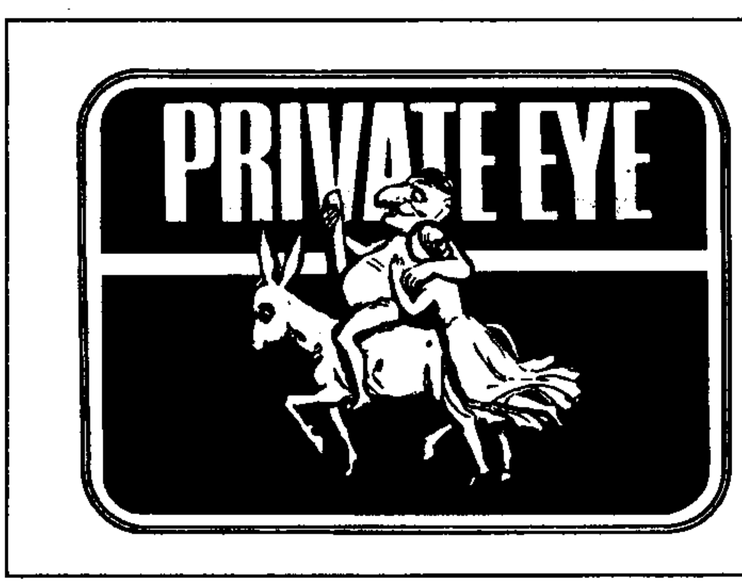
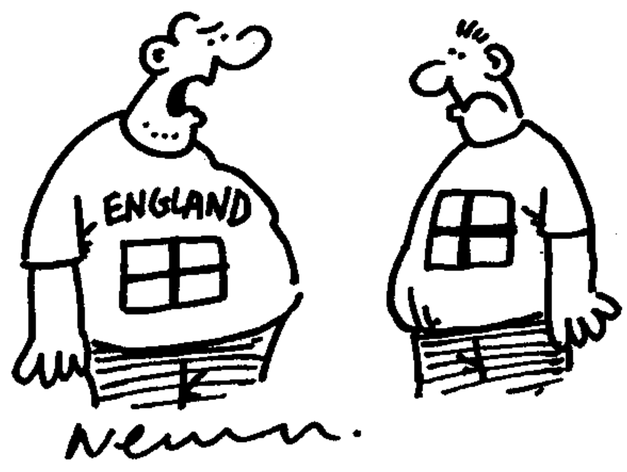




"It's us who need sick notes – not the players"

THERE was great hilarity last week at Labour's attempt to defuse sleaze allegations by setting up an "ethics committee" to vet big donations – especially when it transpired that the members include Lord Levy, the fundraiser who recruited many of Labour's most controversial benefactors. But the talents of his colleagues on the committee shouldn't be overlooked.

One is Baroness (Margaret) Jay. Presumably her main task will be to watch out for cronyism – something for which she is well qualified. In the 1970s her then-husband Peter Jay was appointed British ambassador to Washington by their chum David Owen, the foreign secretary. It was a puzzling choice, given that Jay worked as an economics hack at the *Times*, but the decision was approved by the prime minister, Jim Callaghan – who happened to be Margaret's father.

Lord (Matthew) Evans, veteran boss of Faber & Faber, is another inspired selection. His greatest triumph was in 1991, when he published a book by Seymour Hersh alleging that Robert Maxwell was instrumental in the kidnapping of Mordechai Vanunu. There was some scepticism about the allegation, but the publisher held a sensational press conference at which he produced "fresh evidence" confirming the story. Evans revealed that he had just travelled to Amsterdam to meet a private detective who, in return for £500, confirmed to Evans that he had been hired by Maxwell employees to bug the phone of a *Sunday Times* reporter working with Vanunu.

Alas! The "private detective" was none other than Joe Flynn, Fleet Street's most notorious hoaxer. Since much of the ethics committee's work will involve checking the bona fides of mysterious donors, milord Evans's ability to spot a wrong 'un will be invaluable.

JUST five days after the Potters Bar rail crash, Jarvis, the engineering company responsible for maintaining the track, advertised for railway engineering trainees in the *Evening Standard*.

Jarvis claims in the advert that it is "maintaining and indeed exceeding standards of safety and quality within the operating railway". In order to "sustain this ambition", the company says it is seeking "enthusiastic and self-motivated individuals" with "commitment and ability". And how much is Jarvis planning to pay its new recruits – based in expensive central London? Why, £10,000-£14,000 a year!

"NEW" Labour's favourite health care guru Dr Chai Patel has netted himself a tidy £8m bonus by negotiating the sale of the Priory Group of rehabilitation clinics to a management buyout team.

The Priory was formerly owned by Westminster Health Care, the company which Patel took into the private sector three years ago as chief executive. It has now been sold for £288m to a management team including Patel, backed by venture capitalists Doughty Hanson.

The most extraordinary thing about the sale is that Patel has made it clear he wants to develop further long-term partnerships between the Priory and the NHS. His eagerness to take on board more NHS work is hardly surprising considering that the Priory charges up to £500 per patient per night. But how this ambition squares with Patel's role as a government adviser who has long advocated closer links between the NHS and private healthcare companies is harder to fathom.

A HUGE amount of government and public sector recruitment is now outsourced to Capita. This includes the recent selection process to find lay members for employment tribunals which was, predictably, a technical disaster.

On 8 May, the closing date for applications, a number of online applicants received an email from the company explaining that owing to "minor technical problems over the past few days, you may have been unable to complete and submit (electronically) your application".

The email announced a two-day extension and gave a weblink to the online application form. Unfortunately the weblink didn't work.

DAME Beryl Bainbridge was on characteristically magnificent form at Brenda's jubilee bunfight for "the arts world" at the Royal Academy last week.

After refreshing herself liberally, the tired and emotional Bainbridge waylaid a fellow-guest and began complaining about what a bloody boring party it was. Within seconds Bainbridge found herself being shooed away by a royal equerry – whereupon a friend asked what on earth she had said to Her Majesty.

"Oh God, was that the Queen?" Dame Beryl groaned. "I thought it was Vera Lynn."

HOW OPINION POLLS WORK

● More people will change their viewing and listening habits for the Queen's Golden Jubilee than for the World Cup, according to a survey published today.

— *Daily Telegraph*, 16 May.

● Many more people are likely to watch the World Cup than the television coverage of the royal Jubilee celebrations, according to a Guardian/ICM opinion poll published today.

— *The Guardian*, 22 May.

NEWS

THE real reason for the delay in attacking Iraq is not simply that the United States still has to drum up support in the west: the US is critically short of the right bombs and missiles.

"Smart" bombs, or "precision-guided munitions" (PGMs), have been central to modern warfare since Vietnam. More than 70 percent of munitions used by NATO in Kosovo in 1999 were PGMs, as were 10,000 of the 18,000 bombs and missiles used so far in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

The US is now critically short of "bunker-busting" GBU-37 bombs. It ordered 129 in 1996 for $29.6m, but stocks have been diminishing since the US air force began hitting Al-Qaeda and Taliban cave hideouts. Military leaders are adamant that no attack on Iraq can be contemplated until the shortage is addressed.

As Admiral Dennis Blair, commander-in-chief of US Pacific forces, recently told Congress: "Operation Enduring Freedom has reduced the already limited world-wide stocks of precision munitions across all the services." A Pentagon official said: "The only real option as far as Iraq is concerned is to sit tight and replenish (the PGM) stocks."

"Smart" weapons such as the British navy's Tomahawk cruise missile would provide vital support to any US-led attack on Iraq. The ministry of defence (MoD) bought 65 of the 700-mile range precision weapons from the US for £190m in 1999. Although the MoD refuses to say how many it has fired during recent campaigns, it is thought that 19 were used in the Kosovo war and six were launched last October around Kandahar, south-east Afghanistan.

The UK bought an additional 23 missiles in 1999 and, according to the Pentagon, the MoD recently bought an extra 48 missiles in late October 2001 for £60m. Despite the increase, though, Britain has only three nuclear submarines that can fire the missiles.

The US meanwhile has 184 bombers, 77 ships and 53 submarines that are "cruise missile capable". But it is critically short of cruise missiles to put in them. These weapons are designed to be used at the early stages of an attack to destroy airfields, and military command and control centres, with little risk to aircrews. An attack on Iraq without such weapons would be unthinkable; and the royal navy alone could not deliver a decisive cruise missile attack on Iraq, which has many more military targets than Afghanistan. Until the shortage of PGMs is made good, attacking without "smart" weapons would be a very dumb idea.

IT IS six years since the law commission called for a new criminal offence of corporate killing, yet none has been established. And it is three years since the government produced a corporate manslaughter bill designed to end the effective immunity for big companies whose negligence causes unnecessary deaths.

At about the same time John Prescott, deputy prime minister, said: "The law must come down hard on those who persistently put people in danger. Health and safety is a priority issue for those at the top of all organisations and they must be prepared to face the consequences of ignoring the law."

It is exactly two years, meanwhile, since Disaster Action, consisting of victims and their families from several of the more prominent disasters of recent years, held a press conference to launch a new book, *The Case for Corporate Responsibility*. This argued for carrying out the law commission's recommendation of clear legal responsibility for the directors of companies that cause disasters; a new system of police investigation into disasters; and punishments for directors of companies convicted of killing and causing grievous bodily harm by negligence.

But none of these recommendations has been kept or demands met. The corporate manslaughter bill has vanished. "New" Labour's friends in big business lobbied strenuously against any measure to incriminate people like them… and as usual they have been successful.

INTERESTING to see that the *British Medical Journal* asked David Elliman, London consultant in community child health, and Helen Bedford, lecturer at the Institute of Child Health, to review *Private Eye*'s special report on MMR. The pro-MMR duo were – not surprisingly – highly critical and accused the *Eye* of producing a "dangerous" journalistic exposé rather than a "well-argued scientific treatise".

But they would say that, wouldn't they? Elliman and Bedford have been paid by vaccine manufacturers to speak at and attend educational meetings and for research. Unfortunately the *BMJ* forgot to mention this competing interest. The journal said it was an oversight.

JUST FANCY THAT!

Boom has increased North-South divide

Independent, p. 6, 22/5/02

Financial slowdown to narrow North-South divide

Independent, p. 21, 22/5/02

FRIAR Michael O'Kelly, a Catholic priest and former dean of Reading, has been jailed for nine months for having "disturbing and degrading" images of child pornography on his home computer. But no such fate befell former south London detective Kim Weston, who was convicted in January of 12 charges of possession of indecent photographs of children.

Weston was giving evidence in a complicated case last year when he revealed that a relevant document, which did not seem to be recorded anywhere, had been created on his computer. He was told to submit his computer for police examination. When he asked for it back a few days later, he was told that the necessary inquiries had not yet been made.

He became rather agitated and kept asking regularly for his computer back. Some senior officers became suspicious and decided to have a close look at the computer. Their search resulted in the charges against Weston and his conviction at Sutton magistrates' court, where he was fined.

In March he was dismissed from the police.

EDWARD Dolman, chief executive of Christie's, takes out an onion as he imparts "extremely difficult and disappointing news" to staff at the auction house.

"As you are all aware, 2001 was an extremely challenging year," he writes in a tear-stained letter. "Against this background, we have decided that it would be fiscally inappropriate to the health and stability of the company to increase salaries at this time." Nor will any bonuses be paid out under the staff profit-sharing scheme.

Well, almost. Dolman absent-mindedly omits to reveal that he himself is receiving a £300,000 bonus and that other board members will also collect hefty cheques for various amounts. In a fit of altruism, or perhaps guilt, one director actually proposed that they all donate their bonuses to the staff this year – but, needless to add, he was overruled.

"I hope," Dolman concludes his letter to employees, "that you will understand the decision we had to take." No doubt they understand it only too well.

Jubileeballs

"QEII GOLDEN JUBILEE SPECIAL. As a sign of respect to our friends across the pond, we at TrekAmerica would like to extend our congratulations to Queen Elizabeth II and offer a special deal for her loyal subjects. Bring a Friend Discount – up to 20%!!! So for example if Prince Charles decides to get away from it all on a Footloose tour he will receive a 10% discount. Should he bring Camilla along then he actually gets 15% off the tour price and Camilla get a 10% discount. If he also chooses to show Prince William the wilds of North America then Prince Charles receives a whopping 20% off the price and Camilla and William each get 10% off the tour price as well."

— Sales pitch from TrekAmerica.

SINCE his successful action for defamation against Lord Gnome in 1994 (*Eyes passim*) things have gone down hill rather for Merseyside solicitor Kevin Alphonsus Dooley.

Inspector Knacker's corruption probe – "Operation Lone Star" – continues to investigate his activities, and he comes up before a Law Society tribunal in July accused of "conduct unbefitting a solicitor".

Those England Mascots: Then And Now

1966 World Cup Willy — 2002 World Cup Dick

THE *Guardian* has long been sceptical about the way in which multinational food producer Nestlé markets its baby milk products in developing countries. As recently as 25 April *Grauniad* diarist Matthew Norman referred to "Nestlé's odious and indeed deadly marketing of formula baby milk in the developing world".

This trend was though bucked by an item in the *Grauniad's* Notebook column on 29 March, headlined: "Nestlé's image still being milked by activists. Time to end boycott of food group." The article dismissed the claims of anti-Nestlé campaigners that the company routinely flouts the World Health Organisation code on the marketing of baby milk products, citing Nestlé's argument "that in a workforce of 230,000 some staff are bound to misbehave".

The campaign group Baby Milk Action says the article is "factually inaccurate" and has asked the journalists responsible to publish a correction, adding that: "Unfortunately the 'notebook' article has since been used by Nestlé Chief Executive Officer Peter Brabeck-Letmathé, to defend the company at the shareholder meeting and by organisers of the Nestlé-sponsored Hay-on-Wye literature festival, which celebrities are trying to boycott."

Germaine Greer and novelist Jim Crace have both cancelled their appearances at this year's lit fest – which runs from 31 May to 9 June – in protest at Nestlé's sponsorship. It is surely a coincidence that the festival is also sponsored by, er, the *Guardian*.

Street Of Shame

IT ISN'T every day the maiden speech of an obscure peer merits a 650-word report in the *Daily Telegraph*, as one did on 16 May.

Proudly emphasising that the new boy had been "speaking without notes", the *Telegraph* revealed that one fellow lord had congratulated the novice on "his depth of knowledge" while another praised his "considerable international experience". Although this historic occasion was overlooked by every other newspaper, the *Torygraph*'s gushing account more than made up for their oversight. As well it might: the man in question was milord Black of Crossharbour, the *Telegraph*'s hilariously self-regarding owner. The paper even found space to mention that "Lady Black, the writer Barbara Amiel, was in the chamber, seated in the area reserved for spouses". And for which paper does she write? Er, the *Daily Telegraph*.

"WORLD Picture Exclusive: Robbie & Rachel's Love," screamed the front-page splash on last Sunday's *News of the Screws*, with photos of Robbie Williams and Rachel Hunter together in Los Angeles.

Another triumph for *Screws* editor Rebekah Wade? News International boss Les Hinton doesn't think so: in fact he's distinctly unimpressed.

Wade paid £85,000 for the pictures. She then shelled out a further £35,000 to another agency which had photographed Robbie and Rachel – not because she needed the photos, but because she wanted to stop any other paper from running them and thus protect her scoop.

Alas! Since the lovebirds were canoodling in a very public place – at the LA Lakers' arena during a basketball game – there were lots of photographers present, as Wade should have guessed. Yet another agency, Matrix, promptly sold similar shots to rival tabloids for £1,000 each. Which left Rebekah with a bill for £120,000, but without a "world exclusive". At a time when the Murdoch rags are cutting costs, Rebekah may have some explaining to do.

THE *Daily Mail* is not the only media organ banned from referring to *Express*-owner Richard Desmond as a pornographer.

Hacks at PA were dismayed to be told by bosses that they too are forbidden to use the P-word. PA staff may, however, report other people describing Desmond as a pornographer, so it can only be hoped that they will make as much use as possible of this loophole.

THE *Daily Mail* knows the true meaning of an on-off relationship.

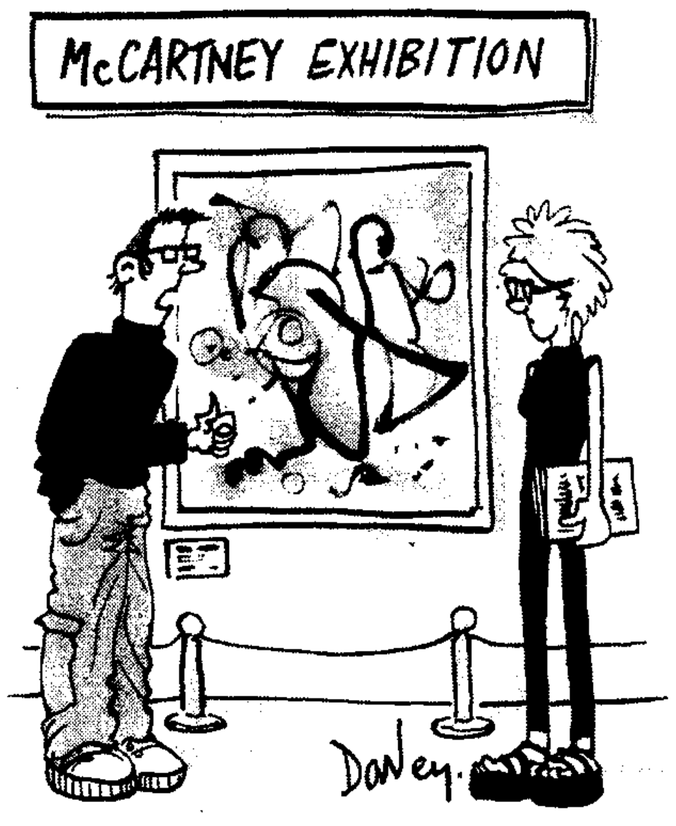
In an article about supermodel Gisele Bundchen and her film star boyfriend Leonardo DiCaprio, the *Mail* reported on 20 May (p27): "As they walked hand-in-hand, it appeared that their relationship is definitely back on."

Meanwhile on page 39 of the same edition *Mail* diarist Nigel Dumpster came up with yet another exclusive, this time from the "Vanity Fair bash at the Eden Roc Hotel", where the guests included: "Leonardo DiCaprio, who is somewhat quiet these days after splitting from supermodel Gisele Bundchen."

DUMB NEW STATESMAN

"10 FREE Barbican Hall Concert Tickets. Christoph von Dohnanyi conducts his final two concerts as music director of the Cleveland Orchestra. To enter the competition, simply answer the following question: Which post is Christoph von Dohnanyi about to relinquish at the Cleveland Orchestra?"

— *New Statesman.*



"The only reason they gave him the show is because he's got a famous daughter"

***OBSERVER* hack Anthony Browne is off to the new super soaraway *Times* – and not a moment too soon, to judge by his charming exchange of emails with the *Observer*'s deputy news editor Ciaran Byrne earlier this month.**

Trouble began when Browne arrived at the office shortly after 10 o'clock on a Saturday morning to find a message from Byrne: "I know you're leaving but you really need to get in earlier. [Your piece] is a page 14 lead which should be away by now, not at midday."

Browne replied at once. "I'll be so glad no longer to be told off like a naughty little schoolboy any more and treated like a responsible, hardworking adult with 15 years' experience of national journalism. You told me that I could file the piece today; my washing machine leaked and I had to deal with it… Grovelling apologies are in order. Treating staff like this just alienates them badly."

Byrne sent a brief reply: "Fifteen years and still lots to learn, my friend."

Browne's was even briefer: "Fuck right off." He then despatched a message to editor Roger Alton announcing that "I'm off. I'm not prepared to be treated like a five-year-old by someone far younger and with far less experience than me. Sack me if you like…"

Boys! *Boys!*

AT Condé Nast, the shameless promotion of company supremo Nicholas Coleridge (see *Eyes passim*) continues unflaggingly. Not content with posting snaps of the man and his photogenic family on its websites, or plugging his dire novel, *The Godchildren*, in the pages of its magazines, the publishing house now has greater ambitions for this gifted polymath.

In the Writer of the Year awards organised by *GQ* magazine (prop: Condé Nast), bestsellers such as Nick Hornby, Tony Parsons and Ian McEwan have been joined on the shortlist by… Nicholas Coleridge! A brave decision, since few readers outside Vogue House appreciate what a literary giant he is; but the mass votes of Condé Nast staff may yet propel him to victory.

Coleridge could have a fight on his hands, however, as the shortlist includes an even more frenzied self-publicist. "Can I ask you a huge favour?" Toby Young pleaded in an email circular sent out last week to several thousand distant acquaintances. "Can you vote for me as *GQ*'s Writer of the Year? All you have to do is go to the relevant web page and select my name… I need all the help I can get."

MEANWHILE, the latest film in the Star Wars saga, *Attack of the Clones*, has failed to impress Toby Young who on 20 May regaled readers of the *Guardian's* second section, *G2*, with his amusing list of ten reasons not to bother seeing it.

These included such witticisms as "the episodes are in the wrong order", "George Lucas is a capitalist running dog" and "it's not the special edition". Unfortunately Young appears to be suffering from his own attack of the clones. In 1999 he published the same list of reasons not to see the last Star Wars film, *The Phantom Menace*, on the website Salon.com.

HUMBUGWATCH

ANGUS DEAYTON makes a living mocking celebrities, often commenting on their private lives, and so deserves to be pilloried when caught *in flagrante*. Few would argue with that. But newspapers which make even more money than Deayton from castigating errant celebs are not best placed to deliver stern moral lectures.

"My friends at the BBC… point out that there are drug-takers in Fleet Street," Kim Fletcher admitted in the *Daily Telegraph*, before hastening to explain why it was a false comparison. "Fleet Street men and women have never been role models."

Ah yes, of course. When the *Sunday People* recently fought a legal battle to publish the tale of a footballer's extra-marital legovers, its justification was not that the story would provide traditional Sunday-paper titillation and amusement for readers (possibly true) but that the obscure sportsman in question was a "role model" (manifest nonsense, especially since scarcely anyone had heard of him).

Last week the *Daily Mail* had a full-page sermon from Stephen Glover describing Deayton as "a more influential public person" than Tony Blair, the Metropolitan police commissioner, the director-general of the BBC or the Archbishop of Canterbury. While conceding that "perhaps" it might be going too far to say that millions of people regard him as a role model, Glover claimed that "as a well-spoken, educated and apparently intelligent person he undoubtedly inspires respect". The BBC was therefore guilty of "moral bankrutpcy", no less, in continuing to employ a man who has "given a bad example to young people". The sermonising was resumed in Monday's *Daily Mirror*, where Sue Carroll deplored the fact that Deayton's career was not yet "in tatters", and condemned the BBC for not sacking a man who "has signed a deal with the devil".

Phew! Is a minor celebrity who reads the autocue on a TV quiz show any more of a role model than, say, the owners or editors of national newspapers? Is Piers Morgan really in a position to dispense advice on marital fidelity, having left his own wife and small children? Is milord Rothermere, proprietor of the *Mail* and father of a "love child", a model of sexual morality? Is Rupert Murdoch? And what of the widespread drug use in News International and elsewhere, often chronicled in the *Eye*?

An editorial in last Friday's *Telegraph* warned that Deayton's behaviour should not be laughed off. Yet senior figures at the *Telegraph* have been sniggering for months about the friendship between their columnist Boris Johnson (married, father-of-four) and Petronella Wyatt. And Boris is not only the editor of the *Spectator* but also a Tory MP. We look forward to an article by Stephen Glover – perhaps in the *Spectator*, where he writes a media column – discussing the moral bankruptcy of the *Spec*, the Telegraph Group and the Conservative Party.

THE sudden flurry of ministerial pronouncements on the euro is not coincidental.

In recent weeks the Dear Leader has come his closest yet to embracing the single currency wholeheartedly, while chancellor Gordon Brown has not demurred. Rather, he has let it be known that his five key economic test have still not (quite) been met.

The soft cop, tough cop double act is deliberate: both men hope that when enough summer holiday makers return to Britain after an agreeable fortnight spending the new currency on sangria and the like, their hostility to monetary union will be weakened.

Then, the autumn will see more gushing praise for the euro, preparing the ground for the brooding Brown to announce that his tests have been met in time for a spring referendum. Should the referendum go Blair and Brown's way, the next stage of the grand plan would see the Dear Leader heading off to become the first president of the European Council – possibly before the general election, thereby allowing Gordon Brown to slip into his shoes at last.

LONDON's mayoral election may still be two years away but another "new" Labour shambles is in the offing.

Mayor Ken Livingstone is desperate to be allowed back into the Labour party, even though his five-year banishment won't officially be over by the time Labour picks its candidate later in the year.

Livingstone's opposition to the part-privatisation of the tube has become more muted in recent weeks, and he has even been playing footsie with party chairman Charles "Fatty" Clarke (who detests him), first by demanding that he should automatically be allowed to run as Labour's candidate, and then by setting pre-conditions for the selection device that will be used to pick the candidate.

The hostility to Ken's early return to the party runs from the prime minister downwards and even embraces erstwhile colleagues in the left-wing Campaign Group, like Dennis Skinner and Brian Sedgemore, who cannot forgive Livingstone for running as an independent.

While Labour still can't decide how to pick its candidate, Millbank has at least decided not to rely on arm-twisting union block votes. But none of this gets the party leadership out of its predicament over what to do about Ken.

London Livingstone haters such as Tony Banks and Mike Gapes want an official candidate to run against him, while grudgingly suggesting that Labour voters could then give him their second vote. All well and good – except that no sane or rational London Labourite is prepared to embark on a mission that would be even more suicidal than the one mounted by official candidate Frank Dobson last time round. One sacrificial lamb anointed for the task by Clarke is Tottenham Labour MP and new boy David Lammy. But he wants nothing to do with "Fatty" Clarke's cunning plan.

RICH people who are costing the country millions by not registering their homes in their own names were the subject of a recent *Guardian* investigation.

Baroness Thatcher and Mohamed Fayed are two of those named and shamed by the *Grauniad*, referring to a land registry review last year that called on the lord chancellor to ban the practice as an abuse.

The article points out that offshore registration is a means of escaping the heavy costs of inheritance tax, stamp duty and capital gains tax. The *Grauniad's* list includes Labour party donors Christopher Ondaatje and Lakshmi Mittal, but omits to mention David Triesman, the general secretary of the Labour Party.

Triesman's £750,000 north London home was bought ten years ago by Ginel Establishment, a Liechtenstein trust run by Edy Frick, the man who managed Robert Maxwell's offshore investments.

JUST weeks after home secretary David Blunkett launched his "policing priority area scheme" during a visit to Stapleton Road in Bristol – one of the first five sites to receive targeted help to reduce crime – a man was shot in a nearby street.

The 22-year-old man was shot on Eve Road off Stapleton Road at around 7pm on 29 April. When the *Eye* contacted Somerset and Avon police to check a rumour that it had taken them more than half an hour to respond to the incident, it took the force more than a week to get back to us to explain that, because of the delicate nature of firearms operations, the police presence may not have been immediately obvious to members of the public.

ARTS minister Tessa Blackstone was "delighted" to announce Tony Blair's appointment of former Tory foreign secretary William Waldegrave as chairman of the National Museum of Science and Industry, the body that runs the Science Museum, as well as the national museums of photography and the railways.

According to Blackstone, Waldegrave "has had a long association with science" and "also has a wealth of public service and private sector experience which will be a great asset".

The national museums credo is to "promote the public's understanding". And, sadly, Blackstone seems to have overlooked the fact that Waldegrave does not have a history of helping the public's understanding, having been heavily criticised by the Scott report about the truth of British arms sales to Iraq.

Blackstone and Blair also seem to have forgotten that their colleague Robin Cook once called for Waldegrave's resignation for misleading the Commons. But that was all a long time ago…

LAUNCHING a Tory wine club, the party's magazine *Conservative Heartland* invites shadow ministers to reveal the secrets of their own wine cellars – among them Ann Winterton, interviewed shortly before her recent dismissal for telling a joke about throwing Pakistanis out of train windows.

And what is Ann's advice to Tory oenophiles? "There should be a good balance of whites…"

THE rise and rise of ultra-Blairite industry secretary Patricia Hewitt may slow down a bit following a careless remark two weeks ago.

In an interview with the *Guardian*, Hewitt said that industrial policy during Labour's first term had placed far too much emphasis on dotcoms and too little on manufacturing. She blamed this on all the nonsensical hype about a "weightless economy", and particularly the seminal text *Living On Thin Air* by Charles Leadbeater. "The idea of *Living on Thin Air* was so much hot air," Hewitt sneered.

Whoops! Had she bothered to look at the book first, she might have noticed that it is dedicated to none other than Tony Blair – and that Blair gave a drooling quote for use on the dust-jacket, praising Leadbeater as an "extraordinarily interesting thinker" whose work raised "critical questions for Britain's future".

MEANWHILE Hewitt has made a bold new appointment to her department: Vicky Pryce, 49, who joins the DTI as chief economic adviser.

Pryce has been associated with two organisations: London Economics and GoodCorporation. Among its recent achievements, London Economics boasts of having evaluated the alternative regulatory regimes that may apply to London Underground following restructuring (privatisation); advising the rail regulator on the implications of horizontal and vertical mergers on the rail industry (privatisation); and advising on regulatory and commercial freedom strategies related to the future of National Air Traffic Services (er, privatisation).

GoodCorporation, as its gloriously "new" Labour name suggests, was formed to assess companies, especially consulting companies, for fairness to employees, suppliers and providers, and services to the environment. Almost all GoodCorporation founders came from the big accountancy combine, KPMG. Vicky Pryce herself (chair) was chief economist there; Michael Littlechild (chief executive) was a partner at KPMG Consulting; Leo Martin (director) was a KPMG Consulting director; and so was George Houpis (another director).

Regular readers will know a lot about KPMG's record on fairness to employees, suppliers, providers and the environment. They will recall, for instance, the helpful advice KPMG gave to Independent Insurance, and the benefits showered on anyone who took out policies with that company when it went bust. They will be delighted that someone with such impeccable credentials will now be so influential at the trade department.

BRIAN COTTER, the 63-year-old Lib Dem MP for Weston-super-Mare, may be almost wholly unknown in his own country, but he has become the object of great curiosity in China following the visit of an all-party delegation of MPs last week.

The main purpose of the trip was to discuss Anglo-Chinese trade and human rights. But before every meeting – on a lengthy itinerary that included Beijing, Xian and Shanghai – Cotter would insist on taking a large stuffed dog out of his suitcase and plonking it on the table. He then explained to his puzzled hosts that the animal was writing a diary of the visit, and must be present at all times.

Embarrassed fellow-members, when quizzed by the Chinese about Cotter's antics, were unable to offer an explanation. As one muttered: "Damned inscrutable, these Lib Dems."

SHADOW treasury spokesman and former Monday Clubber John Bercow put his foot in it during a recent Commons debate on national insurance.

The normally nimble Bercow referred to his colleague, shadow health minister Liam Fox, as "the shadow minister for stealth".

WOMAN IN THE EYE

JULIA DROWN

ONCE upon a time there was a keen young hospital finance officer and trade unionist called Julia Drown. She wanted to be an MP, and was very pleased, despite the big Tory majority, to be Labour's candidate in Swindon South.

As a hospital finance officer she was shocked by the Tory policy of the private finance initiative (PFI), which she saw as creeping privatisation of the NHS. At the annual conference of her union, UNISON, in 1996, she circulated delegates with a searing attack on PFI.

"Profits rather than patients are in danger of becoming the important determining factor in health service plans," she said. "Huge sums are being taken out of the NHS budget to satisfy the whims of private capital." To everyone's surprise the young idealist was elected for Swindon South on a huge anti-Tory swing in 1997.

Very soon, though, she noticed that the Tory PFI programme *had been* adopted wholesale by the "new" Labour government and was being implemented faster than even the Tories would have dared. Julia's enthusiasm for the anti-PFI campaign quickly withered. She became an ardent supporter of the plans to build a new hospital by PFI in Swindon. She also became a passionate opponent of the one academic body in the country to launch a sustained assault on PFI: the Health Policy and Health Services Research Unit at University College London (HPHSRU) under Professor Allyson Pollock.

When Julia Drown became a member of the Commons health select committee, she kept up her campaign against Prof Pollock. Another new member of the committee was Dr Richard Taylor, who in last year's general election stood (and won) as an Independent MP for Wyre Forest – entirely because of his hostility to PFI and its dreadful consequences for hospitals at Worcester and Kidderminster.

In November last year the committee took evidence on PFI in the health service from a number of PFI providers and from Allyson Pollock. Julia Drown cross-examined the witnesses keenly, and wrote six paragraphs attacking the HPHSRU as "extreme" and unreliable. She submitted the paragraphs to be included in the Committee's final paragraphs.

The committee met on 25 April to consider its report, including the Drown paragraphs. Chairman David Hinchliffe ("old" Labour), was shocked at both the tone and content of the paragraphs. When he looked round the room, he was surprised to find that only five members of the 11-member committee were present and that three of the nine MPs who had checked in at the committee that very morning had vanished.

There was no sign of Simon Burns (Tory), and no sign either of two Labour MPs, John Austin ("old" Labour) whose views on PFI during the hearings had been uniformly hostile; and Andy Burnham ("new" Labour) whose views on the subject had not been clear. Desperately anxious not to publish what he regarded as Drown's spurious "findings", Hinchliffe moved from the chair that the paragraphs be deleted.

The committee divided; and Hinchliffe himself didn't have a vote unless the result was tied. Julia Drown voted for her paragraphs and was supported by two other "new" Labour trusties, Doug Naysmith (Bristol North West) and Jim Dowd (Lewisham West). Only two MPs – Dr Taylor and the sole Liberal Democrat, Sandra Gidley – voted for the chairman's motion. So Julia Drown triumphed and her paragraphs were published as part of the report.

Perhaps she is already regretting her stand. First came a withering response from Prof Pollock, who demolished Drown's points one by one, usually by referring to evidence in the health committee report itself. (For instance, Drown wrote that Pollock "confused criticism of capital charges introduced in 1991 with criticisms of PFI". Yet Drown herself had asked in evidence: "Is the problem the capital charges or PFI?" and Pollock had answered: "I think there are two problems.")

Again and again in evidence Pollock had insisted that the charges to the hospital trusts from capital charges (6 percent) were taken into a new stratosphere by PFI (up to 20 percent). Then came a stinging statement from Sandra Gidley, who denounced the six paragraphs as "spiteful" and "unnecessary".

Then on 21 May Harlech West TV broadcast a special programme on the new Great Western Hospital in Swindon. The theme of the programme was conveyed by its title: BUY NOW, PAY FOREVER. The programme exposed the fact that Swindon's new hospital, built by Carillion (Tarmac) under PFI, which cost £98m to build (payable back at £12m a year for 30 years), has had to be subsidised by a top-up from the government amounting to £74m. Allyson Pollock and Julia Drown appeared on programme, not entirely to the latter's advantage.

COURT CIRCULAR

THE QUEEN likes to mark major royal events with a "big" announcement, but Buckingham Palace has been struggling to come up with anything to accompany the jubilee beyond the jubilee honours list.

An amnesty for thousands of prisoners was mentioned at an early stage, but it was ruled out by the government as being inconsistent with its policy of keeping as many people locked up as possible. There is unlikely to be an announcement of the marriage of her eldest son, despite Camilla getting her feet more regularly under Brenda's table.

Camilla's gradual acceptance in royal circles has been masterminded by Brenda's treasurer, Sir Michael Peat, at the palace and Mark Bolland acting for the Prince of Wales. Peat has been aided by Lord Luce, lord chamberlain. Brenda's private secretary, Sir Robin Janvrin, has kept out of it.

Peat, who will become Charles's private secretary in the summer, decided after several meetings with his new boss, and after meeting Bolland, that what he calls "the Camilla thing" could not be left to drift and began a charm offensive on Brenda. Public reaction to her appearance in the royal box for a palace jubilee concert on 1 June will be watched carefully. If all goes well then shortly after 5.40pm on 4 June she may get Brenda's nod to join the family on the palace balcony following the St Paul's service of thanksgiving and the pageant in the Mall.

Peat has also ensured that "the Camilla thing" in relation to the Church of England is addressed, although he has had less success here. George Carey has been reluctant to commit himself, although he personally has no objections to the idea of Charles remarrying. However, his impending retirement as Archbishop of Canterbury has given him the opportunity to pass the buck to his as yet unidentified successor.

THEY SAY that after a time pets become more and more like their owners. It seems something similar applies to royal correspondents.

A hack arriving at the palace for the press briefing on the jubilee the other day was bundled unceremoniously from his taxi by a policeman, to clear the way for a sleek Mercedes limousine behind, with the words: "Hurry along, please, sir. Jennie Bond is just about to arrive."

'Flunkey'

FASCINATING fact for those with nothing better to do with their time...

Typing "www.spunklovingsluts.com" into a web browser produces a page saying, "This website has no connection whatsoever with the Labour Party." Whatever could they mean?

Warballs

"Get ready for another baby boom in summer 2002. This one might not be as big as the post-World War II phenomenon, but demographics experts expect an uptick in the birthrate as a result of 11 September… Consider revamping your line of new baby [flower] arrangements and gifts or just tailoring ads to highlight them – there might be more takers than usual this summer."

— *Floral Management* magazine.

"Capitalise on the home entertaining and nesting trend with kitchen and entertaining giftware. Your customers are craving kitchen accessories. In a post-11 September world, consumers are seeking entertainment closer to home — and often not even leaving home."

— *Floral Management* magazine (again).

"Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! We're going to crash!"

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Unruly pupils must realise "that consequences will be taken"

— Estelle Morris, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, *Radio 4 News*

ANOTHER LITTLE LIE FROM A PRETTY STRAIGHT KINDA GUY

Tony Blair: "These funding stories, they come, they go! These are people who own the Express Newspapers. Well, in my view, it is perfectly acceptable for us to take a donation from them."

Jeremy Paxman: "They also own *Horny Housewives*, *Mega Boobs*, *Posh Wives*, *Skinny & Wriggly*. Do you know what these magazines are like?"

TB: "No, I don't."

— *Newsnight*, 16 May

"THE last time I met that pertinacious political journalist Tony Bevins was a few weeks before his death in March 2001. He told me then a fascinating story. His final interview with Tony Blair for the *Daily Express* had taken place on a flight going to the North East, when the news had already surfaced of his impending departure from the paper. Blair asked him why he was going. Bevins told me that, by way of reply, he simply took out from his briefcase some of the more lurid of the Desmond titles and threw them down in front of the Prime Minister – who, to be fair, shuddered and averted his gaze."

— Anthony Howard, the *Times*, 21 May

TV

The Osbournes (MTV)
Six Feet Under (C4)

THEY'RE looking for subjects to debate at this summer's Edinburgh International Television Festival, but there wouldn't be much point proposing the motion: "This house maintains that American television drama is far superior to the British equivalent." In the unlikely event of finding anyone to oppose it, they would wave a white hankie as they approached the lectern.

We can all write the script: American shows are daring, non-sentimental, non-formulaic, blah blah blah. *The West Wing*, *The Sopranos*, *24*, drone drone drone. Multi-level meanings, expert gag-writing, slick direction, yada yada yada.

Well, let's look at the latest pair of shows to have British TV critics and cultural pundits ordering their marching bands to play the Stars And Stripes as a tribute. And let's especially consider the claim that current American dramas are non-formulaic.

Six Feet Under is the American show which had top-end audiences drooling into their Starbucks lattes the moment *West Wing* and *The Sopranos* began to seem a little bit last year. It's scheduled here as one of Channel 4's alternatives to the World Cup. Created by Alan Ball – screenwriter of *American Beauty* – it's set in a Los Angeles funeral parlour run by the Fisher family.

Admittedly the early comedy, though heavily indebted to Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*, is unusually black by the standards of American television: corpses are in view during many of the scenes and each section ends with a spoof commercial for embalming fluid or mortician's mortar. But, under the surface subversiveness, you start to wonder how original this really is.

The basic dramatic tension here is the contrast between the family's demeanour in public – serene, compassionate, people at terms with death – and their private lives: chaos, cruelty, an inability to understand life. Sounds familiar? The joke in *The Sopranos* is that mafiosi feared in their professional roles are dysfunctional neurotics at home.

Given that *The West Wing* also concerns the gap between professional and private duties, it can be seen that the three American shows which have had British scriptwriters weeping into their beer recently have identical premises: choose a big job – gangster, undertaker, president – and show us the ironic contrast behind the scenes. Stand

by for the inevitable slew of Emmy-chasing shows about families of stuntmen who are cowards at the dentist or the employees of a major hamburger chain who have turned vegetarian in private.

Also, after only two high-profile works – this and *American Beauty* – Ball is already exposed as following a formula. Both scripts take an apparently happy and prosperous American family and reveal the moral demons beneath the surface. In *Six Feet Under*, the apparently saintly mom is an adulteress; the all-American daughter's a junkie and one of the sons is secretly gay. As Ball systematically dismantles the standard American family – how you long for one character not to have a secret! – you start to think that anti-sentimentality can be as cynical and manipulative as sentimentality itself.

Already acclaimed by one British critic as "the greatest television programme ever made", **The Osbournes** is an MTV fly-on-the-wall documentary series filmed in the LA mansion of the drug-damaged Brummie who used to lead Black Sabbath.

The central joke is an undeniably good one. The rock star who styles himself on stage The Prince Of Darkness – biting heads off bats on stage and surrounded by black mass paraphernalia – is found at home unable to operate the video or discipline his kids. The standard critical shtick on this is that it's a real-life version of *The Simpsons*. But do you notice anything? Take an unlikely and high-profile job – rock music's prince of darkness – and show the ironic contrast behind the scenes. In fact, it's the heavy-metal version of *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under* and *The West Wing*. It might be time to drop non-formulaic as a compliment for American programming.

Finally, those TV critics here who suffer from 51st-statism when it comes to fiction should examine very closely the second series of the revered *West Wing*, playing now on Channel 4. A show which was genuinely original when it began has now become gut-emptyingly sentimental.

The recent moment when Prez Jeb read the Thanksgiving proclamation of the pilgrim fathers against swelling background music was, in essence, sheer Disney. *ER* and many other series made the same journey because the American television system – of ratings obsession, inflated pay-claims by actors, over-production of hit shows – eventually pushes all programmes towards the middle ground.

There has been some great recent American television drama but some recent British shows – *Cutting It*, *Spooks*, *Murder* – have suffered unfairly because of their birth certificates. Let's stop grovelling to what comes out of Los Angeles.

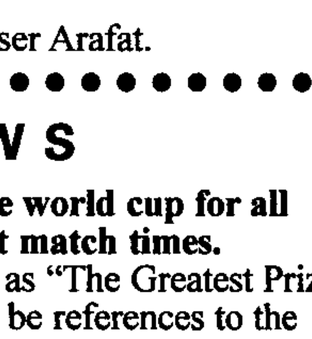
'Square Eyes'

DUMB BRITAIN

Steve Wright's Big Quiz, Radio 2

Wright: To which English king was Guinevere married?

Contestant (*after long pause to think*): Henry VIII.



The Weakest Link, BBC1/2

Anne Robinson: What "T" are people who live in a house paying rent to a landlord?

Contestant: Terrorists.

Robinson: In which film did Dudley Moore star as the title character?

Contestant: 10.

Robinson: Ken Follett is a famous what, author or photographer?

Contestant: Authotographer.

The Enemy Within, BBC1

Nigel Lythgoe: Who was the 20th century Israeli general-turned-politician who always wore an eye patch?

Contestant: Nelson.

Another contestant: Yasser Arafat.

MEDIA NEWS

THE BBC is milking the world cup for all it's worth – and not just at match times.

Already hyped absurdly as "The Greatest Prize Known To Man", there will be references to the competition in all sorts of programmes – especially the fairly dire ones that producers hope can be saved by a bit of football "glitter".

Thus Johnny Vaughan's chat show on BBC Choice, which has an audience of 40,000 (Vaughan's contract is worth £2.5m), is frantically being rebranded into an "entertainment show immersed in the excitement of the world cup". And Radio Five Live intends to try to boost audiences with a torrent of irritating promotion, even during crucial games.

A memo directs match commentators to "ident 'Five Live' every five minutes through match", with programme trails in both halves and during "the aftermath". The key is to keep "transient sports listeners locked-in" – whatever the cost.

GOING LIVE

WHEN ITV's lunchtime news went live to Juliette Bremner in Sangatte on 24 May, it wasn't terribly illuminating.

Standing close to the refugee centre but with no refugees in sight, she revealed: "It's very far from certain that anything will happen."But if something did happen, "what might be the timetable?" asked Dermot Murnaghan back in the studio.

"It's almost impossible to say," was her confident reply.

PANORAMA's investigation of Lord Archole last July was considered so compelling by BBC bosses that the programme was moved from its usual graveyard slot at 10pm on a Sunday to a popular primetime one.

Oddly enough *Panorama*'s compelling investigation by Vivian White into the government's misuse of advertising – *How the Blair government broke the rules separating public information from party propaganda* – stayed where it was last Sunday, late and largely unwatched.

Any suggestion this was done to limit Tony's embarrassment would be totally unfounded. After all, BBC director-general Greg Dyke's £50,000 donation to Labour was given *before* he became D-G.

THE BBC's investigative reporter Paul Kenyon, star of *Kenyon Confronts*, was recently attacked while making an undercover programme about horse fixing, when his contacts in the racing world discovered his identity.

Kenyon's unmasking has been blamed by some on an ITV documentary that featured Kenyon and was broadcast on the night of the attack. But there is another explanation which is less popular with the BBC. On the day of the attack, BBC's *Panorama* confirmed it is making a film about the horse racing world. Both programmes are due to be broadcast this summer. The racing world was already edgy about undercover reporters following a warning letter in the National Trainer's Federation newsletter, but it seems the *Panorama* announcement may have finally tipped the balance, leading to Kenyon's assault.

HOW times have changed for Simon Schama. In a puff for the latest instalment of his *History of Britain* series – nicely timed to coincide with jubilee weekend – the *Radio Times* cannot sing his praises too highly.

"The invitation to Simon Schama to join the BBC's team covering the Queen Mother's funeral in April put the seal on his transformation from private man to public persona," writes the *RT's* Hugh Costello. "If there were a position of historian laureate, Schama would be odds-on to get it."

But Schama's reputation as darling of the establishment has not always been so certain. In July 1969, the month of Prince Charles's investiture, the *Eye* reported on the *Sunday Times* 1,000 Men and Women of the Century series. One "Simon Scharma [sic.], a Cambridge don" had been commissioned to write a pocket biography of the Queen for the series, in which he referred to Her Maj as belonging to the "regnum of mass consumption… like most carefully designed products, the Queen comes flavourless, harmless, beautifully packaged but a bit expensive… with amiable feudal eccentricities… the monarchy survives to restore its earliest function, to celebrate the rite of fantasy."

Such *lèse-majesté* was too much for the *Sunday Times*, which replaced Schama's piece with a more respectful substitute, referring to Her Majesty as "charming, witty and wise… with beautiful eyes and a peaches and cream complexion".

EVEN as a septuagenarian grandpa the Dirty Digger continues to live up to his name – as he proved during an interview on Australian radio last week.

Perhaps for the first time in journalistic history, a business news story had to be prefaced with the warning that it might be unsuitable for children. Having announced that News Corp lost $7.75 billion in the last quarter – the biggest loss in Australian history – the Digger graciously agreed to talk to various hacks via an international conference call.

"Good morning friends!" he began cheerily. "I feel this has been a very successful quarter for our company. I do not know of another company among our peers with as bright a two-year growth outlook as we have."

Rafael Epstein of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) was understandably puzzled: "What about the fact that you'll go down in history as Australia's biggest corporate loss?"

"That's a pure technicality," Murdoch snapped. When Epstein politely challenged this ridiculous assertion the Digger quickly drew the interview to a close, concluding with a curse on "fucking ABC".

ABC's equivalent of the *Today* programme, *AM*, gleefully broadcast the Digger's remarks – though only after warning listeners that "this report contains an expletive from Mr Murdoch".

BUSINESS is flourishing for Denham Productions, the Plymouth-based company which makes Rick Stein's cookery shows for the BBC.

Broadcast magazine reports that Denham has picked up two lucrative new commissions from Carlton West Country – *Taste of the West*, a 13-part series about pub grub; and *Eating It Up*, a "quirky magazine programme about food and people's perception of it". Both will be produced by Denham's David Pritchard.

The director of programmes at Carlton West Country is Jane McCloskey. By happy coincidence, David Pritchard of Denham Productions is her boyfriend.

"For obvious reasons I keep any commissions from Denhams strictly at arm's length," McCloskey tells the *Eye*. "David Pritchard and I are indeed in a relationship, however this has no bearing whatsoever on the commissions which are made." We trust this will be enough to silence the mutterings from rival independent producers in the west country who have been less fortunate in obtaining Carlton commissions.

AD NAUSEAM

GIVEN "new" Labour's penchant for propaganda, it was only a matter of time before Tony Blair appeared in an advertising campaign. Lo and behold, he made his debut last week – batting for Britain in a bid to bring back the tourists.

His 60-second schtick, complete with bulldogs and knights playing tennis, is being shown in America; and there's been much-merrymaking at this latest £5m ruse to undo the £12bn of damage foot-and-mouth did to the tourism industry.

One curious omission was overlooked, however: the British Tourist Association appears to have dropped its tagline from another feelgood campaign earlier this year. The catchphrase was "UKOK"; but the arrangement of the letters led several wags to suggest that it looked like "U KOK". Presumably this is why it was deemed an inappropriate caption to set beneath our beaming prime minister.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Jamie Oliver Reed

AS part of culcha secretary Tessa Jowell's draft communications bill, the government has invited advertisers and agencies to suggest how all advertising – press, poster, TV and internet – could be made self-regulatory. Currently only print ads are self-regulatory, with the Advertising Standards Authority the powerless policeman.

The invitation came just days after the ASA's annual report showed a sharp rise of 17.6% in consumer complaints. Anyone who honestly believes that allowing advertising agencies to vet themselves is a sensible idea has plainly never worked in one.

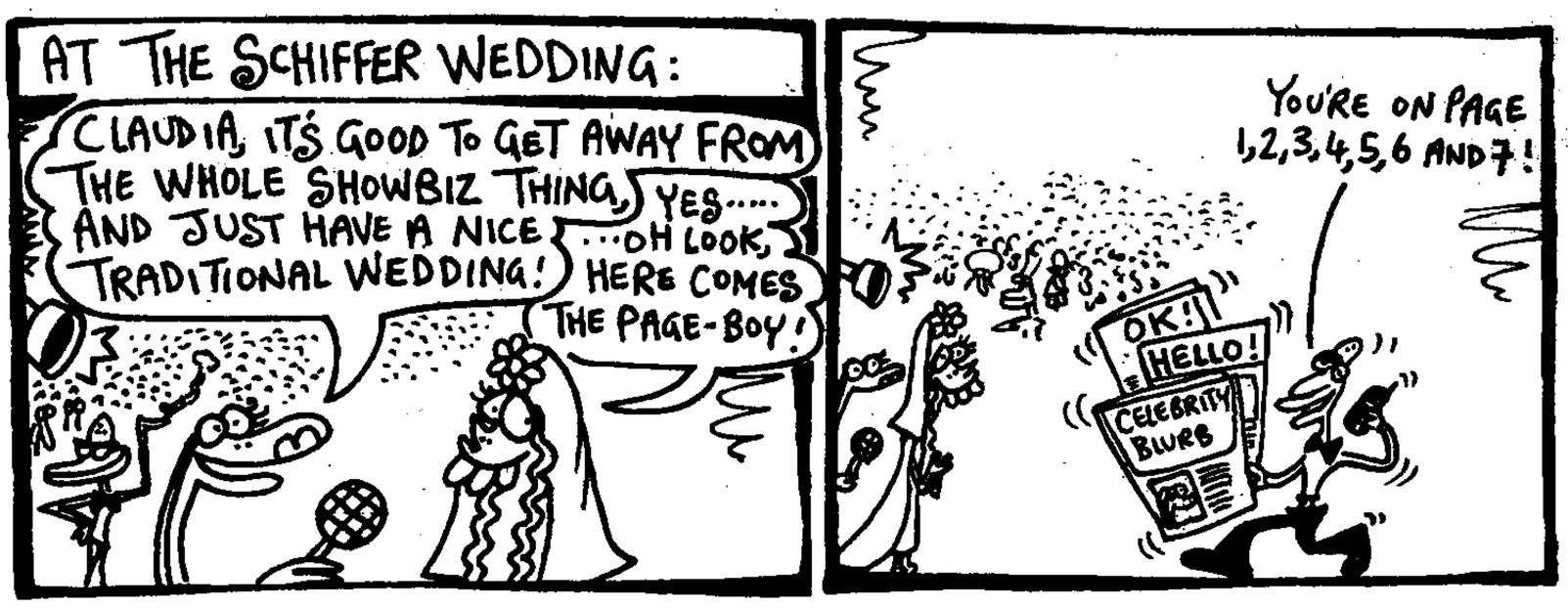
The current process for vetting print ads is that there isn't one. You publish and be damned, with the caveat of an ASA wrap on the knuckles and having to take down your posters a week later. Such a veto garners priceless column inches and is therefore often actively sought after. Remember that consumer attention is advertising's holy grail, by whatever means necessary.

The self-regulatory system is great news for the ad industry, but a proven failure as a deterrent to distasteful advertising. The fact that the *Eye* has been harping on for so long about the French Connection "FCUK" campaign proves the point: French Connection enjoyed huge sales increases precisely because it deliberately flouted ASA rules time and again. (It was the second most complained about campaign last year, just pipped by a small ad offering instantaneous weight loss.)

By contrast French Connection's recent TV ads have been notably tame, largely due to the pre-vetting required by the ITC. If TV advertising goes down the same self-regulatory route as print, expect more shock tactics and lame PR stunts to dazzle you with its creativity.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


AT THE SCHIFFER WEDDING:
CLAUDIA, IT'S GOOD TO GET AWAY FROM THE WHOLE SHOWBIZ THING, AND JUST HAVE A NICE TRADITIONAL WEDDING!
YES.... ...OH LOOK, HERE COMES THE PAGE-BOY!
YOU'RE ON PAGE 1,2,3,4,5,6 AND 7!
OK!
HELLO!
CELEBRITY BLURB

DOING THE ROUNDS

Whose records are they anyway?

"The national strategy for information management in the NHS is increasingly centralist and very unclear. To me, it smacks of a last ditch effort from a desperate department of health to retain credibility for a project that will melt down in the next 18-24 months."

SO says the head of an NHS health informantics service. This is bad news for Tony Blair, who is banking on an NHS computer revolution as his best hope of delivering tangible improvements in the NHS by the next election. If successful, the world's largest single IT project ever would enable electronic prescribing and booking of appointments, freedom of referral throughout the service, easily accessible cradle-to-grave electronic records and the collection of accurate and up-to-date data for quality control.

Alas, the history of IT in the NHS suggests it may not be up to the task. The Wessex fiasco of the 1980s (*Eyes passim*) was an attempt to standardise the computer system across a single regional health authority and was abandoned amid acrimony and law suits at a loss of £43m. The computer-aided dispatch for the London Ambulance Service failed, resulting in the death of several patients and the introduction of discredited Read codes to develop a "new electronic language" for the NHS, was riddled with conflicts of interest and abandoned at a cost of £60m. In April 2002 only 2 percent of hospitals managed "level 3" electronic patient records (the target was 35 percent) and the target for 60 percent of GPs to be able to call up patients lab results electronically was also missed. And a recent audit commission report (*Data Remember*, geddit!) found that only half the hospitals in England and Wales are able to collect enough data to know if they are meeting the government standards on waiting times.

Despite the rhetoric of "new" Labour's *Shifting the Balance of Power* (*Eyes passim*), responsibility for developing the IT strategy has not been devolved downwards but rests with Professor Sir John Pattison, director of research, analysis and information at the department of health. Pattison's baby is the health records infrastructure (HRI) which, according to one DoH source, is "plastic at present but should be set in concrete by December".

The upward shift in power is confirmed by plans for the DoH to manage centrally all the IT funding by April 2003. The bill for developing the strategy will be more than £13bn over the next six years, but no one at grass roots level that M.D. has spoken to has any idea of how it will work. As for Pattison, he told the *Guardian*: "We have to be prepared to control the way those extra resources are spent much more centrally than in the past."

This central control of information management is most evident in the health and social care act 2001, which became law earlier this month. The infamous section 60 states that "the secretary of state may by regulations make such provision for and in connection with requiring or regulating the processing of prescribed patient information for medical purposes as he considers necessary or expedient (a) in the interests of improving patient care, or (b) in the public interest". In English, this means health secretary Alan Milburn can authorise disclosure of your confidential medical records to other interested parties without your knowledge or consent.

The DoH is keen to point out that previously there was only a common law obligation of confidentiality and that this new law reestablishes the rights of patients in most situations while ensuring essential work (eg the collection of information for cancer registries and research) can continue. However, the safeguards to prevent abuse of the act by the health secretary seem less impressive when it emerges that members of the "independent statutory watchdog" (the Patient Information Advisory Group) were handpicked by Alan Milburn and can be dismissed by him. And they've only ever met twice.

No one disputes the importance of disease registries and research in planning the provision of health services; but there must be a better way to manage this information than introducing a law that relies on politicians and civil servants behaving as ethically as doctors when considering who should have access to health records. And given the track record of fraudulent and incompetent IT projects in the NHS, it's not inconceivable that your vital statistics could end up where you don't want them to. Your kidneys may be yours, but your health records belong to Milburn.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

FAR be it from this column to dispute the views of Robert Sturdy MEP, who at some length in our last issue challenged our faintly critical comments (*Eye* 1053) on the worth of the inquiry being staged by the EU parliament into the foot-and-mouth disaster.

As an inquiry member Mr Sturdy defended the value of a visit he and his fellow MEPs made to Cumbria, supposedly to give those directly affected by the disaster a chance to air their views. As we pointed out, much of the two hours designated for the only public meeting held by the MEPs was taken up by Scottish politicians and local officials telling them what a good job they had done.

As a fact-finding exercise there could scarcely be a greater contrast to the self-important grandstanding of the MEPs than the rival inquiry being held by Cumbria county council, chaired by Prof Philip Thomas. Unlike the MEPs, the professor's team has shown real determination to get at the facts behind the self-justifying cover version put out by the officials. The picture of governmental incompetence, arrogance, cruelty and dishonesty thus emerging has been devastating, not least in evidence given by Longtown auction mart.

Britain's largest sheep market unwittingly became the epicentre of the national epidemic when so many sheep bought there in February 2001 turned out to be infected after being transported to Devon and all over the country. On 15 and 21 February, 21,900 sheep were sold through Longtown. FMD was first identified in Essex on 19 February, and confirmed in several counties over the following days. By 25 February these cases included sheep bought from Longtown by Devon dealer Willy Cleave.

The next day Maffia officials arrived at Longtown; and by 10 o'clock that morning market staff had been able to supply them with records of every transaction and the destinations of every one of those 22,000 sheep. In terms of a tracing exercise, this evidence should have been gold dust since nothing is more vital in the early days of an epidemic than to track down every possible contact. Astonishingly, a month later, by which time the epidemic was raging all down the west side of Britain, the Maffia admitted to Longtown that it had "lost the records".

That vital evidence had never been used, just when it could have provided the Maffia with the most valuable clues it could have wanted in its efforts to halt the epidemic. Could Longtown now resupply its records? Even more astonishingly, in August, the Maffia admitted it had also lost the second set of records, by which time the epidemic was all but over.

Another curious item of evidence supplied to the Cumbria inquiry came from auctioneer Haig Murray, who described how he and his colleagues had been called out to value infected stock on several farms over the Easter bank holiday weekend. When they looked at the Maffia website, they were amazed to find these infected premises not being reported. This was when the government was first trying to pretend it had the epidemic under control and that the stricken countryside was open for tourist business.

These are precisely the sort of facts one suspects will not find their way into the report by the MEPs; let alone that of the Anderson inquiry, set up by the Beloved Leader to show how his government's handling of the disaster was beyond reproach.

'Muckspreader'

FOCUS ON JARVIS

WHO are the men behind Potters Bar maintenance contractor Jarvis's brilliant business strategy of cutting costs, sacking staff, raking in profits and then blaming the workers when it all goes wrong?

Since 1994 "flamboyant" chief executive **Paris Moayedi** has transformed a struggling building firm into a plc with £676m turnover and made himself very rich. He earns £509,000 and has more than three million Jarvis shares. If the share price doesn't implode post-Potters Bar, that makes him a paper millionaire 10 times over.

The Iranian-born engineer studied in Bradford and was able to transform Jarvis thanks to the company's close relationship with the Labour party, thanks to whom it now runs schools, roads and even a psychiatric unit (as well as contributing to our railways).

To break into rail maintenance Jarvis bought three privatised infrastructure firms (Relayfast, Fastline and NimCo-Northern Infrastructure Maintenance Company). Labour trade minister Nigel Griffiths let the deal through without referral to the monopolies and mergers commission after his concerns were addressed by assurances from Moayedi. At the 1998 Labour party conference Jarvis sponsored a meeting with transport minister John Prescott and local government minister Hilary Armstrong on the platform. At around the same time Labour's Lord Hogg of Cumbernauld began working as a paid consultant to Jarvis (a post he no longer holds).

Jarvis is also a corporate partner of the New Local Government Network, the pro-privatisation think tank to which it pays £10,000 a year.

Having former Tory transport minister and London mayoral candidate **Steve Norris** on the Jarvis board helps too. His presence limits Iain Duncan Smith's attempts to make political capital from the Potters Bar disaster. And **Colin Skellet,** the Jarvis chairman, also comes highly recommended: he is chairman of Wessex Water, until recently a subsidiary of, er, Enron. Under Skellet Wessex racked up many prosecutions for pollution.

Along with ex-BR managers **Bob Clarke** and **Bernard Westbrook,** who joined the board (though only Clarke remains), in 1999 Jarvis hired Kevin Hyde, former chair of New Zealand's privatised railways, to head Jarvis Rail. A New Zealand government report subsequently condemned poor safety on the privatised railway.

PS: Jarvis's website boasts how much it does to make schools and universities clean, safe and modern, but that is not the experience of York University students where Jarvis is building new accommodation.

The firm has already built 514 student rooms and 22 guest rooms at the colleges Halifax and Wentworth, with another 204 under construction. In October 2001 the university admitted that Jarvis Construction had not completed work on Halifax and 39 students were being put up in hotels. In April the York student newspaper reported that Jarvis had agreed to pay students the massive sum of £10-15 compensation for continuing problems with accommodation, including loss of heating and hot water, the lack of a cooker and problems with showers.

8.00 UK's Worst . . . Rail Operators?
Exposing Britain's most incompetent rail firms. Postponed from April 25 (T) (8038)

The Times

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

OUT FOR THE COUNT

LIB DEM candidate Qassim Afzal felt he had a good chance of defeating Manchester city council's Labour deputy leader Martin Pagel in the local elections on 2 May. But when the polls closed the start of the count was delayed because by 9.40pm only nine of the ward's 10 ballot boxes had arrived at the town hall.

At 9.58pm the returning officer announced that the tenth ballot box had been "lost" and proposed that the count go ahead. When the nine boxes were counted, Afzal claimed to be ahead by between 50 and 70 votes. Then, at 10.33 — more than an hour-and-a-half after the poll had closed — the box turned up. When its votes were counted, Cllr Pagel was declared the winner by a margin of 163.

Not surprisingly the defeated candidate wanted to know why one ballot box had taken 93 minutes to arrive from a polling station that was no more than 15 minutes' drive away. Manchester's deputy returning officer Andrew Scallon explained in a letter that the unnamed presiding officer at Temple School polling station had been "taken aback" by the amount of paperwork he had to complete when the poll closed. So he had driven to his home in the Blackley area — in the opposite direction to the Town Hall — and finished the paperwork there. His arrival at the count was further delayed by heavy traffic around the MEN Arena. The presiding officer had apologised and been reprimanded. "I have no reason to believe that the integrity of the election and it's *[sic]* result was affected," wrote Scallon. No further action is to be taken.

Afzal, who has complained to police and petitioned the high court in an attempt to have the election rerun, is even more unhappy after hearing this explanation. The MEN Arena is not on the direct route from Blackley to the Town Hall, for a start. And the *Eye* has established that that night's Kylie Minogue concert did not finish until 10.45pm — more than half-an-hour *after* Britain's dimmest election official was supposed to have been battling through the traffic leaving the gig.

PS: The name of the ward where this Zimbabwe-style pantomime took place? Cheetham!

● WHO needs elected mayors when the buggins-turn variety provide such entertainment? Wakefield's outgoing mayor Don Hitchen has been involved in an unseemly incident at the Ossett Railwaymen's Club. His Honour Mr Mayor was returning late from a civic function and had managed only one pint before closing time. There is a difference of opinion as to exactly when the Labour councillor demanded his second pint — the club's committee says a minute after closing time, while he insists it was a minute before. Also disputed is the precise level and nature of the abuse directed at bar staff by the burly ex-NUM official. He has dismissed the incident as "summat and nowt". But the unfortunate outcome is that Mr Mayor finds himself barred.

SELBY DATE

A FASCINATING insight into the planning system comes from Yorkshire, courtesy of the files of Selby district council.

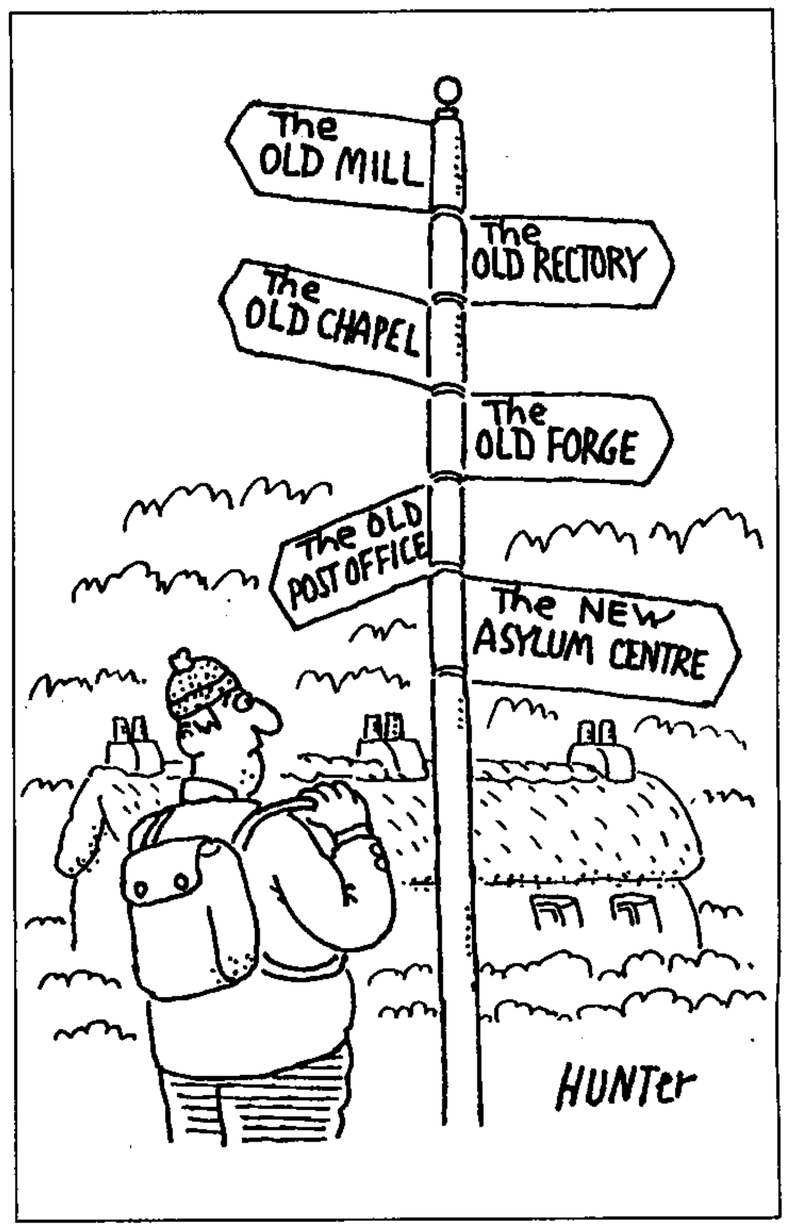
Residents of Appleton Roebuck, near York, were overwhelmingly hostile to a proposed "executive" housing development in the grounds of their village's old vicarage. Nimby reasons aside, the creation of a new access to the development would entail a dangerous narrowing of a section of the village's main street, which is heavily used as a "rat run" in rush hours. However, on 19 December last year the application was passed by Selby district council's planning committee.

Selby's planning files, however, reveal that on 20 December senior planning officer Richard Borrows sent a letter to the developers, Wrigleys, notifying them that the planning application had been *rejected* because of the road narrowing issue. On 4 January Jennifer Hubbard, a planning consultant acting for Wrigleys, replied to Borrows as follows: "If memory serves, 20th December was the day of your office lunch when I recall you mentioning that, being car-less, alcoholic liquid had been consumed — implicitly in quantity. I have no problem with this and can only thank you for finding time to issue the Appleton Roebuck notice of decision at such an otherwise fun-filled time. Your festive joke has been much appreciated but, now that we have discovered the deliberate mistake in the decision notice, a new one would be even more appreciated. (Oops!) Regards, Jenny."

On 7 January Borrows replied to Hubbard that he had "conducted an inquiry" into how he had sent her the wrong notice, but "remained… at a loss" as how to explain it. Seemsh pretty obvioush but, anyway, he sent her a letter with the "correct" decision, tidily dated "20 December".

Objectors to the development might be forgiven for supposing that the planner and the consultant had an overly cosy relationship and that well-founded objections had been treated as a joke. Let's hope the local government ombudsman, who is now studying the file, is more understanding.

● PLANNING officers at Camden council, north London, have had a bollocking from councillors for keeping them in the dark about the British Museum "wrong stone" scandal, in which it was discovered that the rebuilt internal south portico of M'lord Rogers's Great Court scheme had been constructed of inferior French stone and not Portland as specified. "It is really not acceptable," Labour's Ailleen Hammond told the planning committee, "that we should first learn of a problem, known to our officers, from reading about it in *Private Eye*." [*Eye* 984, to be precise.]



CRAPITA GETS TOUGH

ALTHOUGH Crapita lost its contract to run Lambeth council's housing benefit service last year (*Eyes passim*), it retained contracts to administer council tax and, via a subsidiary called Equita, to act as the council's bailiffs.

So it was that 94-year-old Florence Thorndycraft, who suffers from senile dementia, received a council tax bill from Crapita for the sum of £513 — which she disputed. Before the issue of whether Mrs Thorndycraft actually owed the money had been resolved, she received a letter from Crapita informing her that "enforcement bailiffs and porters have been instructed to seize your possessions to settle this debt. Your goods will then be sold at private action".

The letter continued: "Should the amount realised from the sale of all your goods be insufficient to cover the sum outstanding, including bailiff and auctioneers' costs, we shall recommend that proceedings are commenced for your committal to prison without further notice". Mrs Thorndycraft, who lived in Lambeth until June last year, is now being cared for in a residential home in Twickenham, beyond Crapita's clutches.

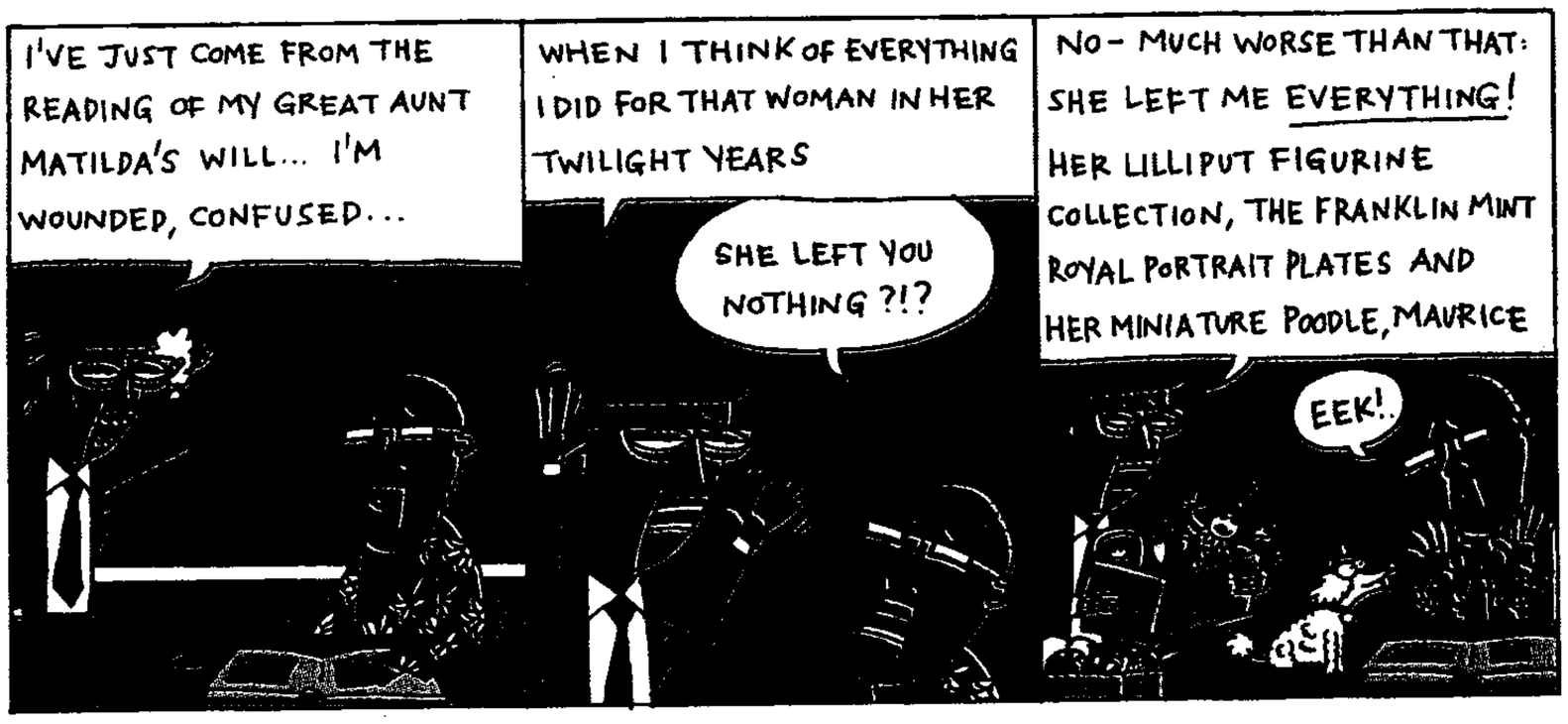
A Lambeth spokesman tells the *Eye:* "We are sorry for any distress suffered and have told Capita to show more sensitivity in the future." So that's all right then.

● ONE reason for the advance of private companies in local government is the need to increase competition. An interesting example is the increasingly lucrative field of recruitment to top town hall jobs, a market cornered by Crapita.

Its subsidiary for recruiting people into local government (at great expense to council taxpayers) was called Capita Recruitment & Assessment Services, aka CRAS. The subsidiary was booming along nicely when, confronted by annoyingly successful competitors, including an "executive resourcing" team from accountant PriceWaterhouseCoopers, its share of the market fell.

Crapita's competitive dynamos soon came up with an enterprising solution: they bought up the team from PriceWaterhouseCoopers and started a new firm with a "new" Labourish name, Veredus. After so effectively swallowing and stifling a major competitor, Crapita now controls 45 percent of the public sector recruitment market. How competitive is that?

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


I'VE JUST COME FROM THE READING OF MY GREAT AUNT MATILDA'S WILL... I'M WOUNDED, CONFUSED...
WHEN I THINK OF EVERYTHING I DID FOR THAT WOMAN IN HER TWILIGHT YEARS
SHE LEFT YOU NOTHING ?!?
NO- MUCH WORSE THAN THAT: SHE LEFT ME EVERYTHING! HER LILLIPUT FIGURINE COLLECTION, THE FRANKLIN MINT ROYAL PORTRAIT PLATES AND HER MINIATURE POODLE, MAURICE
EEK!

NOOKS and CORNERS

RECENT publicity about the property empire of My Lord Falconer of Thoroton QC, the roly poly former dome supremo who is now Tony's minister for housing, planning 'n' regeneration, has at least focused attention on the alarming implications of the government's desire to "speed up the planning process."

A green paper – *Planning: Delivering a Fundamental Change* – was published at the end of last year. In the foreword, Stephen Byers, the secretary for transport, local government and the regions, announced that "some fifty years after it was first put in place, the planning system is showing its age. What was once an innovative emphasis on consultation has now become a set of inflexible, legalistic and bureaucratic procedures. A system that was intended to promote development now blocks it."

Never mind that our listed building legislation associated with planning was never intended to "promote development" but has evolved out of a consciousness of cultural values that was painfully sharpened by the destruction of the Second World War. In "new" Labour Britain it is obviously a huge waste of time and money to have a public inquiry on such planning issues as, say, Terminal Five at Heathrow which, after five years, results in the decision the government was going to make anyway: to say yes please to the design by the Richard Rogers Partnership. Getting things done quickly with fewer people involved obviously makes sense.

It is when we look at the small print, notably about what affects most people – the fate of ordinary, decent buildings in our towns and cities – that it becomes clear that, as ever zealous for reform, change and modernity, the government has not thought things through. The alarming clause in the green paper is the proposal to "reduce the number of statutory consultees"; and at a recent meeting with the joint committee of the various amenity societies, it was made clear that this could mean them.

At present local authorities have a legal obligation to consult with such bodies as the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings or the Victorian Society over listed building applications; and in return for dealing with a continual torrent of paperwork, these societies receive a block grant from English Heritage. Now both the funding and the consultation may be under threat.

No doubt things could be more efficient and, when all local authorities process everything electronically as they must do by 2005, it could become easier and cheaper for consultees and any interested person to see and comment on planning applications. At present, however, the system operates well; and both English Heritage and local authorities get expert advice at low cost.

And, as more than a third of local authorities do not employ a conservation officer, it is expert advice which helps keep the built environment civilized. Yet the green paper insists that consultees "are also a major source of delay". This is a monstrous attempt to shift blame from incompetent authorities. As the director of the Victorian Society has complained: "We have 28 days to respond to a new planning application, after which time any comments we make are ignored. Even if we wanted to cause a delay, we couldn't."

The current system results from half a century of interaction – sometimes angry, but usually positive – between concerned individuals and groups on one side and politicians and bureaucrats on the other. The main point is, it works. So why change it? What Stephen Byers' department would like instead is not yet clear.

It may be that, if they are consulted, the interested expert bodies will be obliged to bill local authorities or developers instead of getting a grant – a sort of nightmare Birtist internal market system which would simply not work; or maybe they will be denied both the privileges and chores of being mandatory consultees, although they cannot be excluded altogether. It may be that English Heritage will be left as the only statutory consultee to comment on listed building matters while continuing to see its budget cut by the treasury.

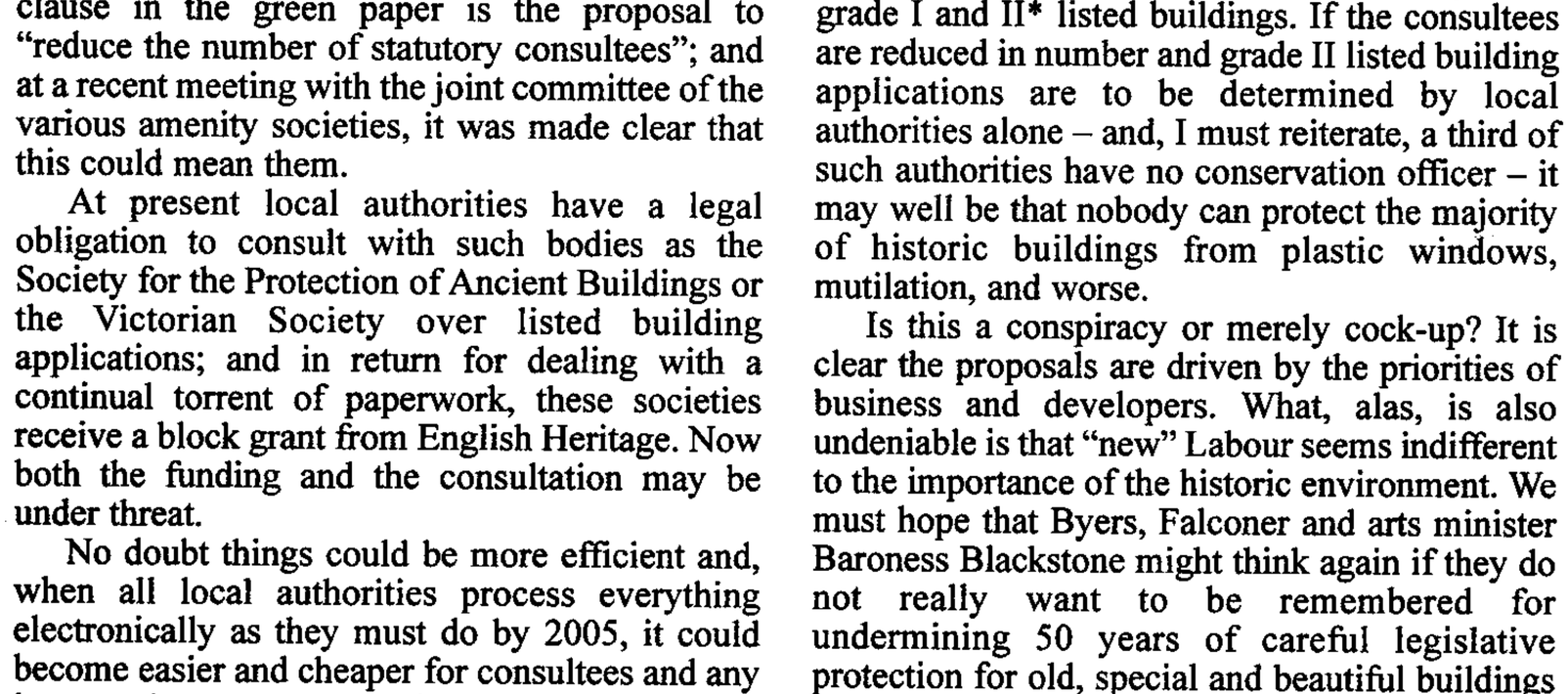
Interestingly, English Heritage welcomes the activity and expert advice of the various amenity societies. One reason is that they see *all* applications while (especially since Jocelyn Stevens emasculated the work of the London Division) EH is directly concerned only with grade I and II* listed buildings. If the consultees are reduced in number and grade II listed building applications are to be determined by local authorities alone – and, I must reiterate, a third of such authorities have no conservation officer – it may well be that nobody can protect the majority of historic buildings from plastic windows, mutilation, and worse.

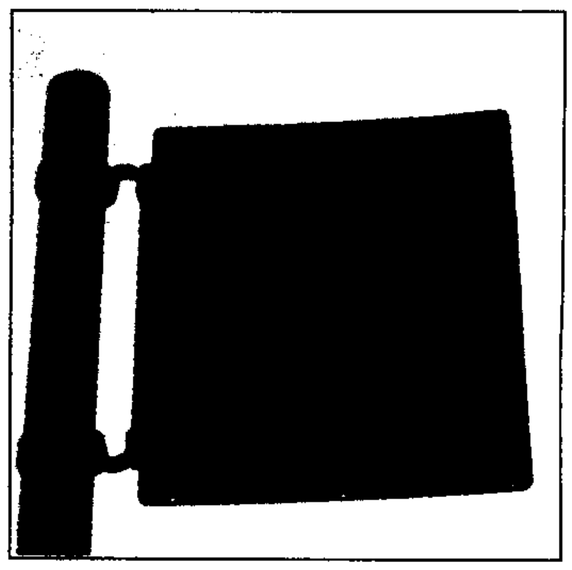
Is this a conspiracy or merely cock-up? It is clear the proposals are driven by the priorities of business and developers. What, alas, is also undeniable is that "new" Labour seems indifferent to the importance of the historic environment. We must hope that Byers, Falconer and arts minister Baroness Blackstone might think again if they do not really want to be remembered for undermining 50 years of careful legislative protection for old, special and beautiful buildings and places.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


I can't believe it–look over there!
YVES KLEIN RETROSPECTIVE
VICTORIA KLEE GALLERY
Hoxton Arthouse Cinema
Mali Season
Fancy seeing that in the East End–talk about out of place!
GAWD BLESS LIZ N' PHIL
Pop Art's just so passé!
Someone should tell them!



I-SPY

Bolton **(submitted by Steve Magner)**

Yichang, China **(submitted by Eva Brocklehurst)**

£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

LAST week's Classical Brit Awards were the tacky shambles everyone has come to expect as honoured "guests" paid £250 a head to watch not terribly distinguished instrumentalists mime their own recordings.

A fine new feature this year was to have well-known authorities on classical music like, er, Mohamed Fayed, introduce the turns. The Albert Hall erupted into guffaws when Fayed told the audience that Russell Watson was, in his fuggin' opinion, a superior voice to Pavarotti.

But the evening sank to an all-time low with the disgraceful and humiliating treatment meted out to Ursula Vaughan Williams, widow of the great composer Ralph. Mrs Vaughan Williams is now in her 90s and frail, but she remains an icon of the music world; and the administration of the Brit Awards had invited her to come on to the platform to receive the prize for Best Orchestral Disc, which went to a Chandos recording of her husband's 2nd Symphony.

The disc's conductor, Richard Hickox, was abroad, so Ursula would be accepting it on his behalf; and when the moment came she duly shuffled (with great effort) up on to the stage — only to find herself marooned in front of several thousand people, unacknowledged and ignored, while the awards anchorwoman (who clearly had no idea who Mrs VW was, and probably wasn't too sure about Mr VW either) pressed on to the next item.

It was horribly embarrassing and was aggravated when the stage staff tried to push poor Ursula out of the public eye and down the backstage steps: a manoeuvre her 92-year-old legs could not and would not accomplish.

For the sake of the TV coverage the incident was patched over. But for those who were there and saw it, it was yet another indictment on the Brit Awards charge sheet.

MEANWHILE, in its guide to the new season the Royal Opera House excitedly announced a new beginning this month under its executive director, ex-BBC news chief Tony Hall.

Opera-goers are promised the distinguished Swedish tenor Gösta Winbergh singing the role of Bacchus, notoriously difficult (to sing and cast), at the prestigious opening night of the season on 6 September, in a brand new production of Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* paid for by Cuban Mr Moneybags, Alberto Vilar, in his latest act of social climbing *(surely "overwhelming generosity to the cultural life of his adopted country?" Ed.)*

Alas! No one seems to have told the management that Winbergh died in March. It would be monstrous to suggest that announcing a dead singer, and hoping gullible patrons don't discover the truth until later, is better for business than letting on that the search is on for a last-minute stand-in!

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Getting the needle

Sir,

Re: MMR. How sad to see that the jingle of cash registers now takes preference over good journalism even at the Eye.

As if it were not enough to continue to inflate the trousers of ambulance-chasing lawyers by MMR/your dogged flogging of the dead horse that is the autism nonsense, you now seek to exploit the legitimate worries of confused parents yourselves with the publication of a nice little earner in the form of a regurgitative leaflet at £1.50.

Yours sub-threateningly,
CHARLIE ELLIS,

Via e-mail.

PS: Worried parents seeking a more educated overview could do worse than www.spiked-online.com, issue 20 May 2002. (Thanks for the many letters about the MMR pamphlet. Most were positive, but there were a number in this vein and there were a couple of references to the above website. Ed.)

Statistical error?

Sir,

HP Sauce PE 1054.

You state the cost of stopping benefit is, O horror, more than the amount of benefit saved.

Compare this cost with that of fines and the process of trying to collect those fines.

Then perhaps compare it with the cost of a custodial sentence.

PE is not backward in criticising other's statistics so watch your own.

ROY GRAY,

Via email.

Still on the road

Sir,

With reference to your article "Focus On Granada" (page 9, 30 May 2002) you stated that our channel Men and Motors had been chopped. This is not the case and as I write the channel thrives, so much so that Men and Motors will be extending its broadcasting hours by four hours every day from 1 June 2002 to cater for our motoring viewers.

Also I would like to point out that Men & Motors comes under, and is owned by, Granada Sky Broadcasting. We are a joint venture company between British Sky Broadcasting and Granada Media.

If you could please ensure your error is brought to the attention of your readers I would be grateful.

Kind regards,
MALCOLM PACKER,

Head of Press and PR, Granada Sky Broadcasting Ltd.

More Consignia Lookalikes
bluesure
everything covered in one policy
chorus
KurzweilAI.net
HUBBLESITE
Sorven Holdings Limited

Oh yeah?

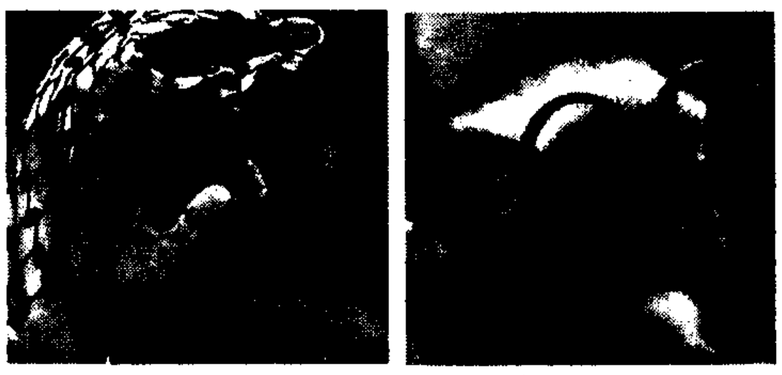
Sir,

Although this may be a surprise to you, the vast majority of Millwall supporters are in fact normal football loving folk who have no interest in violence, thuggery or right wing politics. They are however becoming increasingly tired of lazy journalists who continue to treat the club as an easy target for inaccurate clichés and stereotypes. In fact, just like the Who Are The Far-Right Loonies piece (1054). Introducing football supporters to the piece was poor enough, but using Millwall, a club whose proactive approach to tackling racism has been widely praised, was just pathetic really. Cheap jibes like that one aren't clever and linking innocent people to racism isn't funny, but I'd rather hoped you already knew that.

Yours disappointedly,
PHIL KENNEDY,

Kent.

Lookalike



Before **After**

Sir,

Am I right in thinking the recent siege of Ramallah has taken an intolerable toll on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat? Looks like he could use a holiday.

Yours etc,
Jen Eane.

Via email.

Quiz master

Sir,

As an occasional contributor to Colemanballs and Pseuds Corner, Ian Gillies would have been delighted to be remembered by E.J. Thribb (Eye 1054).

However, young master Thribb has perhaps been rather too generous in awarding himself 17½ out of a possible 20.

Ian's great contribution to the world was as question-setter, not on MASTERMIND but its rather more stylish elder-brother, BRAIN OF BRITAIN.

Indeed, Ian was banned from taking part in MASTERMIND as a contestant, precisely because of who he was and what he did for a living.

Yours,
RICHARD EDIS,

Producer "Brain of Britain".

"Don't worry, son – all teenagers find their parents embarrassing. You're not abnormal."

Sounds familiar...

Sir,

Browsing through my '70s LP collection this week, I found a copy of the concept album "2112" by the Canadian band, Rush.

The story is set in the future, where all creativity such as books, art, and especially music is kept under strict totalitarian control. The main character finds an old guitar, and sets out to play this "new" sound to the world at large, encountering strong resistance from the powers-that-be. Very good it was too.

I hear that Ben Elton has written a new musical. Does anybody know what it's about?

Yours faithfully,
HOWARD ROYSE,

Norwich.

Get a life

Sir,

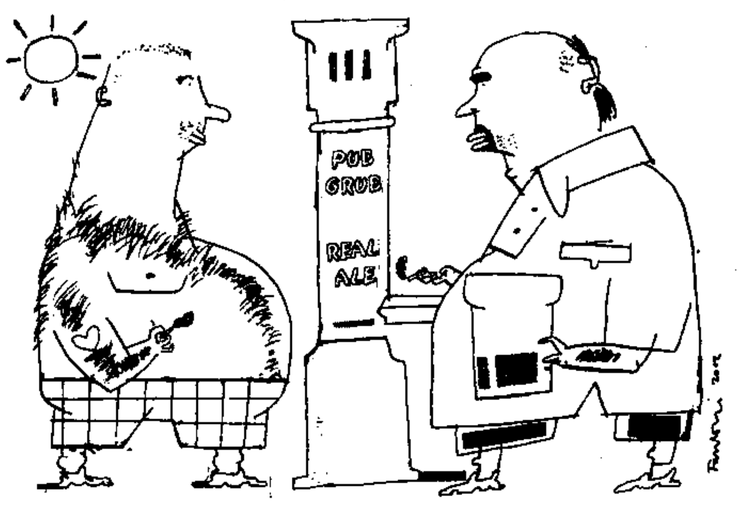
'Ere – wha's your game then, ay? You fik or summink? Any bleedin' ful kno (Eye 1054, p20 – "That BBC IQ Test In Full") EastEnders ain't on telly on Wednesdays as what you 'ad printed in your list.

You tryin' a get Private Eye in Dumb Britain or wot?

Regards,
BRIAN LEEDHAM,

West Ewell, Surrey.

Scenes You Seldom See (11)



"Put your shirt on, mate!"

Missed our queue

Sir,

Prof Richard Larson no more deserves his place in Pseud's Corner with his lecture title "Beyond the Physics of Queueing" [sic] than an art historian would with a lecture called "Beyond the Imagery of the Pre-Raphaelites". Queueing theory is a branch of applied mathematics with various connections to physics, so Prof Larson's title is intriguing, but hardly pretentious.

Still, I guess one can't expect arts-educated tossers like you lot to know that.

Best wishes,
ROBERT MATTHEWS,

Oxford.

Helpless

Sir,

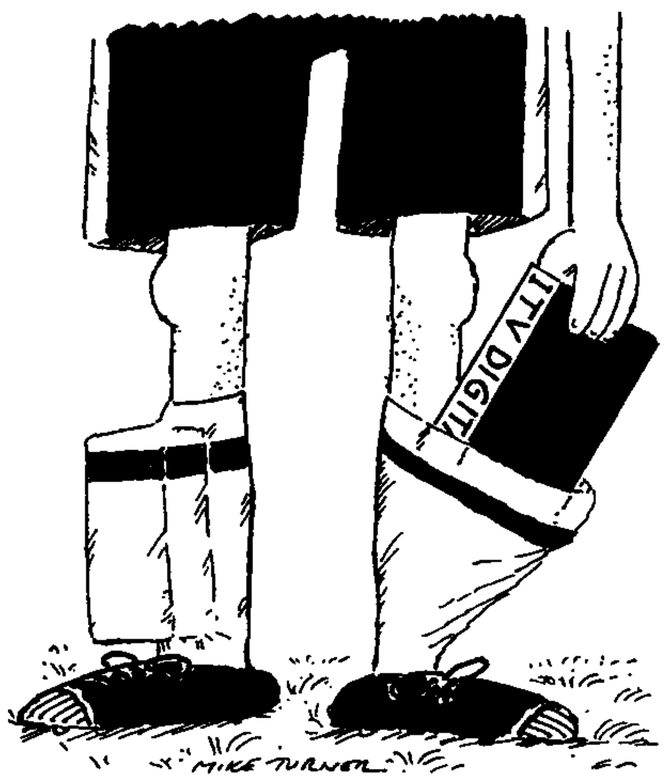
Re: Banking on justice. Regarding the article on page 34 of your last issue, I would like to make clear that Norwich and Peterborough Building Society is funding its judicial review application without assistance from any third party. Help, generous or otherwise, has never been offered or sought from any other organisation whatsoever. To suggest otherwise is simply untrue.

Other than that, we continue to enjoy your magazine.

Yours sincerely,
MATTHEW BULLOCK,

Chief Executive, Norwich and Peterborough Building Society.

101 Uses For An ITV Digital Box
No.2: Shinpads



O·B·N

OK, I'm a queen and there isn't a queen on this planet who would not swap places with Posh because one flash of that winning smile and you just melt. Becks's press pictures – with him oiled, half-dressed, homo-erotic, shot by whoever – do NO justice to the real thing. He is brimming with charm and sweetness and a smile that could defrost the Antarctic.

BOY GEORGE
Sunday Express

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

VICAZ WITH ATTITUDE

Greenwich mean time?

Sir,

*You report (1054) that three sweating hacks on the Beeb's Ceefax spent the night making sure that the service carried the local election results **in full**. Not quite. Whenever I checked the page for Greenwich it was blank. They never did get round to reporting the result – and in the end I had to buy a newspaper.*

ALAN BEECHAM,
London SE10.

No marks and Spencer

Sir,

Your Queen Jubilee album has the caption (put by your staff) of Barbara Cartland having Diana Spencer as her step-daughter. Is your staff too young – or did someone just not see that it was her step-granddaughter?

Yours,
EVELYN KERR,
Via e-mail.

Who's the cretin?

Sir,

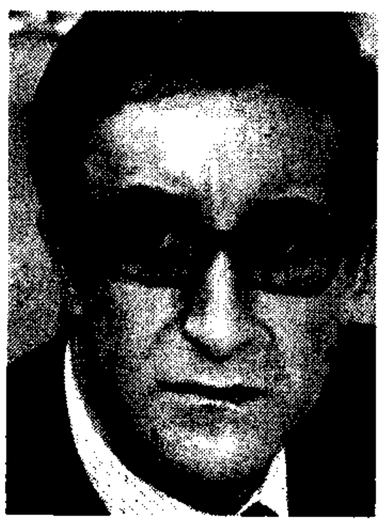
So A. Germaine thinks that NUJ members are cretins for working for local newspapers at £11,000 a year, but says that he/she started on £9,000 a year (1053). Despite the fact that this presumably qualifies him/her for the title of super-cretin, he/she was able to make the remarkable step up from being sacked shortly after starting their first job in journalism, on a local newspaper, to joining the News of the World.

The NUJ is famously efficient in defending individual members with a just grievance. I know: a national officer recently made two trips from London to Wolverhampton to successfully sort out a serious problem which I had with a local manager, and I'm one of only two NUJ members in the workplace. In Germaine's case, it will perhaps remain an unfathomable and enduring mystery why colleagues were so reluctant to take or recommend action on behalf of a colleague who was such an obvious charmer: but then life is full of such enigmas.

Yours,
STEWART PERKINS,
Market Drayton.

PS: I see that, thanks to determined strike action, and helped by NUJ organiser Miles Barter, the weekly journalists in Manchester who were the subject of your story won rises of up to 25 percent, backdated to January, parity throughout the rest of the group, lump sum payments for all, and a humiliating climbdown by the management over derecognition. Not bad for a bunch of cretins...

Lookalike



Aziz

Sellers

Sir,

Has anyone noticed, I wonder, the striking resemblance between Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz and the late Peter Sellers?

MARK,
Tribune, NW3.

A second opinion

Sir,

MD has got it all wrong with respect to public health doctors (What, no public health? Eye 1053), who sold out when they became "purchasers", ie, rationers, in the Thatcher/Major years. They found creative ways to frustrate service development – as there was no money – either by playing the evidence-based medicine card (where is the evidence that this works?) or the user/carer card (where is the proof that users want this service?) to suit their ends. They lost credibility with clinical staff during this period, and hid their decisions behind a cloak of anonymity and lack of public accountability. Who can name the local and regional directors of public health responsible for funding and monitoring Bristol paediatric cardiology services?

It is a pleasing irony that the P45s are being passed round just at the time when some money is at last coming into the NHS. However, public health doctors are increasingly superfluous due to the central "command and control" of this government through national service frameworks and they perform no useful research themselves. They deserve no sympathy as they betrayed their heritage by not standing up to the department of health and politicians in the 1990s. The responsibility for many of the scandals revealed by MD lies at their door.

Yours sincerely,
DR JERRY SEYMOUR,
Sheffield.

Fond farewell?

Sir,

St Albion's vicar uses the plural "valete" in his touching farewell to Barbara Castle. It should be "vale", the singular. Perhaps he seeks to imply that her calling him "vain, shallow, self-obsessed" etc must betray her Jekyll and Hyde personality?

Yrs,
WALTER HARRIS,
Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"He [Steven Gerrard] looks as though he's been playing for England all his international career."
TREVOR BROOKING
(Chris Wells)

"Right now we have 13,000 prisoners sharing a cell designed for one person."
DAVID ROGAN (HM Prison Governors Association), BBC
(John Lilley)

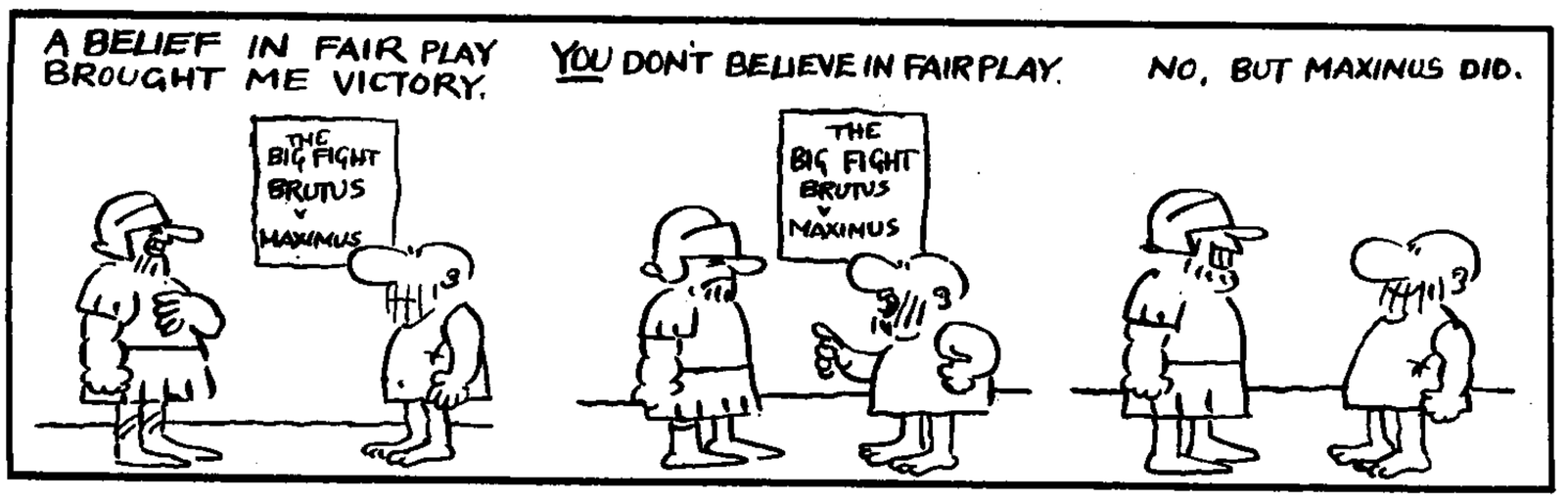
"... so now Marian has the ball – let's see if she can open her legs to the Belles and show us all what she's made of..."
Commentator, Women's Cup Final, BBC1
(Malcolm Turner)

"Can you confirm the suicide bomber was amongst the dead?"
Newsreader, News 24
(Elliot Reuben)

"It was one of those shots that just flew right along the floor..."
JIMMY ARMFIELD, Radio 5 Live
(Matthew Wootton)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN


A BELIEF IN FAIR PLAY BROUGHT ME VICTORY.
THE BIG FIGHT BRUTUS v MAXIMUS
YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN FAIR PLAY.
THE BIG FIGHT BRUTUS v MAXIMUS
NO, BUT MAXIMUS DID.

Letter from the **Netherlands**
from Our Own Correspondent

THE teddy bears, flowers, candles and weeping following the assassination of Pim Fortuyn, our formerly loathed but now much lamented far-right politico, immediately invoked comparisons with the spontaneous displays of public grief following the death of your own Princess Diana.

One singer who passed his sell-by date in the 1980s released the Dutch equivalent of *Candle in the Wind*, which is sure to become a number one soon. Close friend of Fortuyn, businessman Harry Mens, is planning a statue and has already registered Fortuyn's name as a trademark.

That his followers call Fortuyn a "saviour" and "messiah" is no surprise. But what is a surprise in the Dianification of a camp, Dutch 'Graham Norton meets Enoch Powell' sort of politician is the sudden praise coming from his opponents. One former politician of Wim Kok's Labour party (PvdA), a party despised by Fortuyn and which lost half its seats in parliamentary elections on 15 May, dubbed him the "people's politician". Youp van 't Hek, a famous comedian who poured vitriol over Fortuyn during the election campaign, one day after the murder called him a "phenomenon" that "awakened Dutch politics", a "pleasantly disturbed whirlwind" who spoke "clear language".

Fortuyn's party, the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF), remains unmoved by the recognition. During the campaign Fortuyn accused opponents of "demonising" him as a racist, and called on the press for "objective", ie uncritical, reporting. Hours after the killing spokesman and current party leader Mat Herben blamed the media and the PvdA under Ad Melkert for creating an "atmosphere in which the murder could occur". That evening, mobs laid siege to parliament under the slogan "Melkert murderer". Death threats soon followed.

New LPF party chairman Langendam followed up by stating that "the bullet came from the left", and Fortuyn's lawyer, Gerard Spong, pressed charges against several politicians, pundits and a national newspaper for "inciting hatred". Herben and Langendam have since retracted their words and Spong may abandon his move to salvage Fortunist participation in the government, but the phobia against the media and the "Left Wing Church" remains.

The LPF not only ran on an anti-immigration ticket but also opposed our system of consensus politics, in which decisions are pre-cooked by party leaders in backroom deals and rubber-stamped by parliament and party congresses. Which is presumably why the LPF is now enthusiastic about ruling with the mother of all establishment parties, the Christian Democratic CDA, best known for its boast that "we run this country".

Its leader, Harry Potter lookalike Jan Peter Balkenende, now looks set to opt for "dualism": allowing parliament more freedom to oppose the government. At least part of the reason is that the gap between LPF and CDA is too large. The CDA is traditionally pro-Europe. Several LPF MPs want a referendum on EU enlargement and the reestablishment of border controls abolished by the Schengen treaty to be part of any coalition agreement.

Another reason is the volatility of the LPF. Only one of its 26 MPs has prior political experience. Fortuyn was apparently planning to get rid of some of the more odious characters, among them a porn merchant and a horse breeder whose remarks about immigrants went too far even for Fortuyn. Disintegration set in already before the elections, when Miss Netherlands quit amid accusations of "sexist advances" by number 15 on the party's electoral list. Others have now announced their departure. Yet after the upheavals of the last couple of months, no one is taking the implosion of the LPF for granted.

Finally, the PvdA has learnt little from defeat. Melkert stepped down as party leader on 15 May. The following day he engineered his succession as leader of the parliamentary group in a back room deal with party chiefs. The new "interim" leader, Jeltje van Nieuwenhoven, will probably be given an extension by a spineless party congress.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "We pride ourselves on never closing, but we've got our professional reputation to protect, as the biggest and the best brothel in Australia," Mary-Anne Kenworthy told reporters in Fremantle, "and I'd rather take nothing than offer a poor service. After three days, it was clear to me that my girls just couldn't cope any more. So rather than risk compromising our position, I took the decision to close our doors for the first time this millennium."

Ms Kenworthy, the madam of Langtrees brothel, was speaking after a huge influx of American sailors (from the USS Port Royal, the USS Bridge, and the USS John C Stennis) had suddenly overwhelmed her prostitution business. "5,500 sailors disembarked at the docks on Sunday, most of whom had been taking part in the war against terror. They were stressed, because they'd been in a war zone, and they were a lot more agitated sexually than is usual, because they'd been at sea too long. There were queues round the block, and although my girls did their best, they gradually became more and more clapped out. I have a reserve list of 30 girls, but even they were exhausted and there still seemed to be no end in sight. By the third day, many of the girls were unable to walk, and were refusing to have sex, and were asking for money just for taking their clothes off. That's immoral behaviour in my book, and that's when I decided to close the doors.

"We usually find the Yanks are hard work, but lots of fun, but I wish the navy would dribble-feed them in. Couldn't they fly them in a thousand at a time, instead of unloading them all at once? That way we could cope. And I wish they wouldn't bring along their bloody chewing gum and tights. That sort of thing no longer impresses the girls." *(AAP, 2/5/02. Spotter: "Peter")*

— ● —

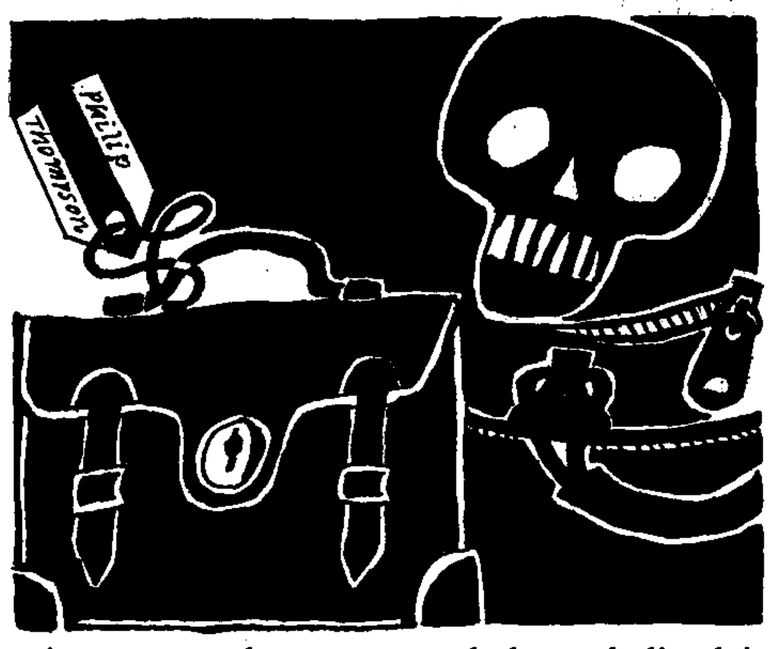
● *"I'm very pleased to have been offered a job interview," said Ravindra Nath Halder, speaking from behind the counter of his snack bar in Calcutta, "but I must confess that I'm a little surprised. You see, I applied for a post in local government back in 1968, and if I was offered a job now, I'd be far too old to accept it.*

Fifty-two-year-old Halder recalled how he had tried to get a job at West Bengal state's labour exchange back in the late 1960s. "I never heard anything from them, so eventually I opened this snack bar, which has done very well over the years. The letter inviting me for an interview is dated 6th March 2002, and I'm astonished that they should have replied now, thirty-four years after I sent my application in. But unfortunately, state government jobs are only offered to people aged thirty-seven or under, so I shall have to decline the interview. But my son applied for a job at the same labour exchange four years ago, and although he hasn't heard anything yet either, he's only twenty-six, so time may well be on his side." (Asian Eye, April 2002. Spotter: name illegible)

— ● —

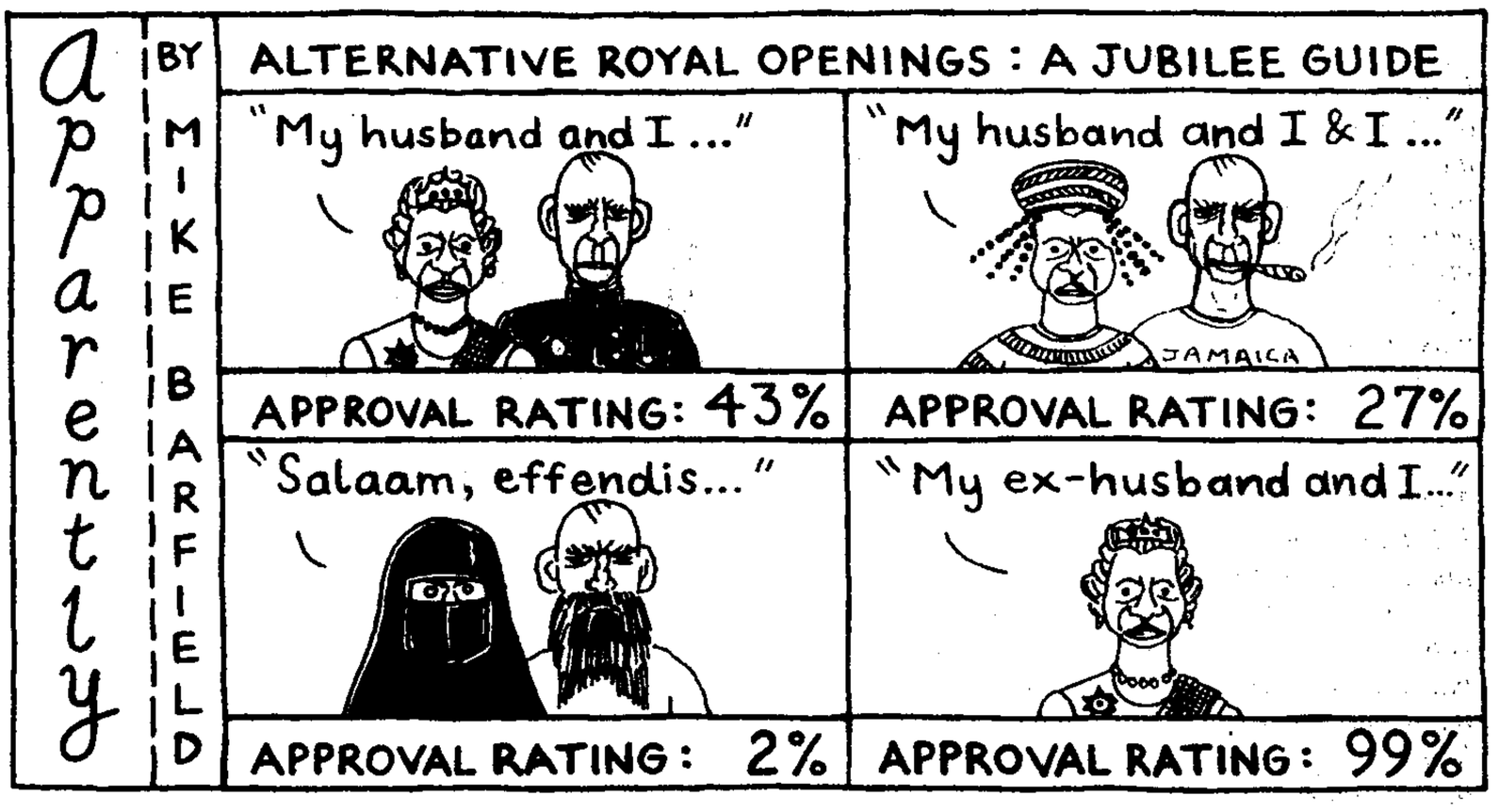
● "I was horrified when I saw the skull and skeleton appear on my monitor," Police Officer Gurmej Marzouki told a hastily-convened press conference at Dubai Airport, "and I immediately signalled for assistance. I initially assumed that someone was trying to smuggle a dead body in a suitcase through the security scanner. But once we'd shut down the machine and begun to investigate, we found Mr Artine sitting patiently on the conveyor belt, inside the machine, amid a row of suitcases."

An airport spokesman later explained what had happened when Artine W., a Somali national, had approached the baggage scanner. "This was his first-ever flight, and he was transiting Dubai on his way to Qatar. He knew that all passengers had to go through a security check with their luggage before boarding the plane, and apparently he did not realise that the X-ray machine is only for baggage. So he put his



suitcases on the conveyor belt, and dived in after them, disappearing inside the machine. He'd heard of body scanners, and thought that's what everyone was supposed to do. When we told him that it was an X-ray machine, he became agitated, and began asking us 'Did you find anything? Have I got cancer?' To quieten him down, we told him we weren't certain, and that he ought to get a second opinion."

After ensuring that he was unharmed by the incident, Artine W. was put on a later flight to Qatar. *(Gulf News, 16/4/02. Spotter: Neil Jones)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

I have been really saddened by the number of parishioners who have wanted to make a song and dance about the recent contribution to parish funds by a local businessman, Mr Desmond, who happens to be the owner of Dirty Des's Adult Vids and Mags Emporium in the alley behind the chip shop in our high street.

Hey, what's come over everyone? Since when was the vicar expected to take a high-and-mighty moral line on what people get up to in their business lives!

It's not my job to go round being judgmental, and laying down the law in some pious way about what people should or shouldn't do with their money!

And remember that, in this case, we are talking about what is relatively only a very small amount of money, ie £100,000, which hardly goes very far these days, as those of you may have recently tried to purchase a yacht or a football club will know only too well!

Secondly, the adult entertainment that Mr Desmond supplies is pretty harmless stuff!

Obviously, I haven't ever had any first-hand experience of the kind of thing Mr Desmond has in his shop! But Mr Campbell, who used to write for some of these magazines himself, before joining the newsletter, assures me that they are completely innocuous and give a great deal of pleasure to many parishioners, and offer employment opportunities to our ethnic minorities and to older women.

So, as we can see, there is no reason for all the innuendo down at the Britannia Arms whenever Mr Desmond's name is mentioned ("Mine's a big one" and that sort of thing!).

It's not funny and it's not clever!

But in case there is any remaining doubt over Mr Desmond's very generous gift to the parish, I have set up a completely impartial committee to vet all donations to the church, and to decide whether it is morally right for the PCC to accept them.

I am sure everyone will agree that there could be no more appropriate person to chair this committee than the man who has done more than anyone else to raise funds for the parish in recent years, my very good friend and tennis partner Mr Levy!

Mr Levy has shown that he has a real vocation for fund-raising, from donors with credentials as impeccable as Mr Mittal, Mr Ecclestone and Mr Gotricha Hinduja.

Who better to make a moral judgement on the suitability of a donation than the man who solicited that gift in the first place?

And just to make doubly sure that there are no allegations of nepotism or cronyism, I have asked my old friend Mrs Jay to serve as one of the committee. (You will

remember that Mrs Jay is the Rev. Callaghan's daughter, and was the matron of our old people's home until we closed it down and threw all the old folk into the street!)

If there are any lingering doubts as to the propriety of our church-giving strategy, I would like everyone to remember those words of scripture, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" *(Gospel according to St Lucre).*

Yours, Tony

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

There is no greater temptation than to start thinking that you are more popular and successful than the person who gave you your job. Most of us know someone in our own lives who may be very close to us but secretly has thoughts of taking over our job. What such people do not realise is that being popular in this world really doesn't mean anything. Anyone can make themselves popular by giving away money, or saying things like "We've got to have better hospitals". But what good does that do? It's only talk. What really matters is not cheap popularity, but whether you're good at your job. And I think our friend Gordon knows exactly what I'm getting at here, don't you, Gordon? T.B.

Women's Groups

Bringing The Creche Into The Courtroom

Speaker: Mrs Cherie Booth.

This is bound to be a very popular talk, touching, as it does, on one of the most important moral issues of our time. Be sure to book early for what will be an absolutely fascinating evening, which I am sure no parishioner will want to miss (and if you do, remember, I know where you all live!). T.B.

The Millennium Tent

Great News!

The Millennium Tent has at last been sold – for nothing at all, thanks to the hard work of Lord Faulkner and his skillful negotiating team. The final offer of £0 clinched the deal against all the other offers (none).

But before we open the well-deserved champagne, there is a small matter of £200 million, which the development company, EasyBucks, has asked us to spend making the Tent accessible by road, rail, sea and helicopter.

I do hope there are not going to be any complaints about this small outlay by the parish, since EasyBucks have promised to turn the Tent into Europe's top concert venue and arts complex, as well as knocking it down and turning it into much needed luxury offices.

Can we now finally draw a line under this and would parishioners kindly remove all dumped fridges, microwaves and burned-out Vauxhall Vivas.

Thank you. T.B.

Salve!

■ A big welcome to Cherie's latest half-sister, who has come over specially to see us. She is the daughter of the Vicar's father-in-law, Mr Anthony Booze, whose career as an actor seems to have produced a number of half-sisters!

But let's all remember the story of the prodigal daughter and not get all judgemental about Mr Booze's family values.

Thanks from the Vicar to the St Albion's Echo and Mercury for going to so much trouble to find Cherie's newest relative, Lucy, in the depths of the Australian outback.

Unfortunately, the parish's First Couple have a very busy schedule at the moment and may sadly not be able to find time to meet up under any circumstances. A.C.

Advertisement

Hug Therapy Workshop
with Dr Mowlam NBG

Everbody welcome in the Church Hall, Fridays, 7.30pm.

Says Dr Mo:

"The power of the hug can help alleviate any of the following conditions: depression, loss of job, alcohol abuse, persecution mania, baldness, attention-seeking, etc. Join our 'group hug' and change your life!"

Remember! Friday night is *'HUG NIGHT'.*

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir,

I would like to protest in the strongest possible terms at the refusal of the Vicar and his churchwardens to allow me to rejoin the congregation. I do not wish to blow my own trumpet, but I think I could contribute a lot more to the parish than a good many of the Vicar's

Yours sincerely,
Ken Livingstone,
The Newtarium
(formerly the Aquatic Pet Centre),
the High Street.

Dear Sir,

I have a great deal of respect for Mr Byers, but were he to fall under a bus (which I acknowledge is unlikely, given his incompetence in running the parish bus service), I would be more than happy to step into his shoes, as I have a lifelong interest in having a high profile post. Come on, Tony! Gizza job! You gave one to Birt and he's really useless. And I'm twice as

Yours faithfully,
Peter Mandelson,
The former
Churchwarden,
Dunspinnin,
The Herbert
Morrison Estate.

Dear Sir,

I was deeply shocked to see that the Vicar had taken money from Mr Richard Desmond, a known pornographer, who exploits Third World women in a quite sickening and

Yours sincerely,
Ms Clare Short.

If you have any letters on this subject to send to the Vicar, please throw them away. We would not like to hear your views, so don't join in the debate, as there isn't one. A.C.

To Remember In Your Prayers

...the people of Gibraltar, who are giving such a sad example of selfishness by putting their own interests before those of their neighbours. May they be helped to realise that there is often no greater contribution we can make in this life than to give up the thing which seems most important to us, in order to make the vicar happy! T.B.

'I forgive Tony' says his tearful partner Cherie

by Our Current Affairs Staff **Steven Gloverat**

A TEARFUL Cherie Booth told reporters today that she was prepared to stand by her wayward partner Tony, following revelations that he had "a sordid relationship" with a known vice king.

Said Cherie: "I had no idea Tony was up to this sort of thing behind my back. It is a sort of schizophrenia. One minute he is the Prime Minister meeting heads of state, the next he is taking rolled-up twenty-pound notes from a sleazy porn merchant."

Angus Deayton

But last night a tearful Tony admitted his mistake. "I have upset my loved ones and let a lot of people down. But it is time to draw a line under the whole business and get on with the rest of my life – namely, taking money from Lord Sainsbury instead."

What You Missed On TV

Classical Brit Awards – Results In Full

Fiddler of the Year M. Fayed

Trumpet Blower (own) of the Year M. Fugger

Horn M. Fuggit

Passport Anglais Not awarded to M. Fugwit

Tenner of the Year The one slipped in the programme so that Mr Fuggoff could appear on television. *(That's enough Awards. Ed.)*

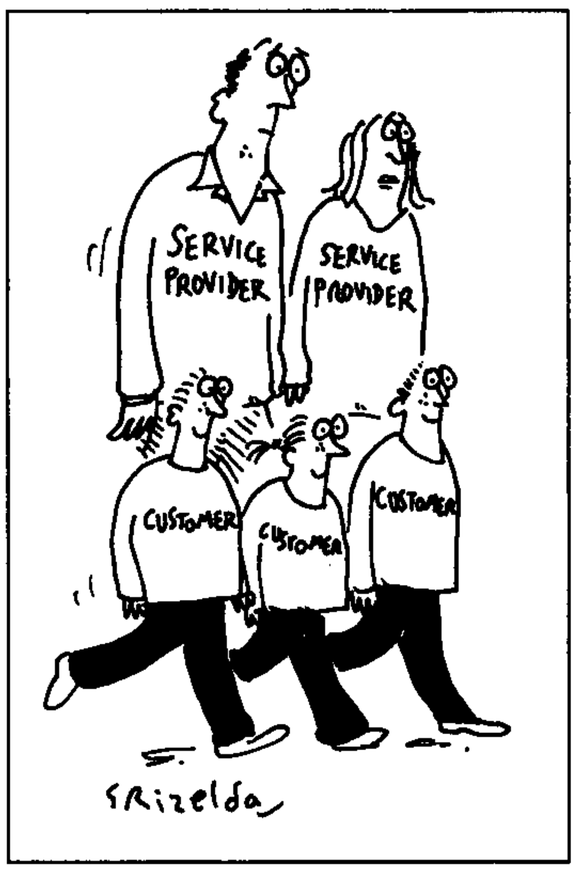
TV Highlights

The Ozamabinladens

Hit MTV show about the crazy life of Ozzie Osama, the world's most evil man, and his dysfunctional family. Hilarious video diaries of Ozzie in his luxury cave.

In this episode, the notorious bad boy of the Islamic band has difficulty trying to control his extended family of international terrorists!

● *Next week: Ozzie decides to meet President Bush and appear at the Queen's Jubilee concert.*



POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Sir Gerald Whent, founder of Vodaphone

So. Farewell
Then
Sir Gerald Whent,
Founder of
Vodaphone.

What an ideal
Name for someone
Who has died.

Your successor
Is called Sir
Christopher Gent.

"Whent
And Gent".

Who says I
Cannot write poetry
That
Rhymes?

E.J. Thribb (£17½ billion in the red)

This poem is sponsored by VodaGnome

Dr Stutterfraud writes

THE LATEST video pictures of Osama bin Laden show a marked deterioration in his health. In particular, his right hand exhibits all the symptoms of a degenerative disease that is turning him into the devil – *manus shrivelensis satanicus,* to give it the full medical name. What happens is that the fingers grow more and more evil until they become flesh-ripping talons which can be used to dissect his victims before they are eaten alive. The only remedy is to bomb Iraq. *(Can this be right? Ed.)*

© Dr Utterfraud, Timestrash

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

JILLY COOPER

Are you a spoon person?

Oh yes, I think spoons are really sexy! I mean, they're really round and curvy – lovely to cup in the palm of your hand – mmmmm!

What's your favourite sort of spoon?

Oh, no doubt about it, a great, big, naughty soup spoon, to plunge into a lovely, thick, steamy cockaleekie. I'd go anywhere for a nice thick cockaleekie! Oh, I am jolly naughty, aren't I?

Have you written much about spoons in your books?

I certainly have! One of my favourite bits in one of my early novels, *Chef*, describes how the hero, an absolutely gorgeous young Old Etonian running a little bistro in the Cotswolds, takes a big wooden spoon and spanks one of his waitresses, Lucinda Rumpington-Pumpington, because she's spilt a great bowl of cockaleekie all over the Earl of Lymeswold's new pin-stripe trousers. One thing leads to another, as you can imagine, and it's not long before they're at it like knives. Or spoons, I suppose!

Some people say you've got spoons on the brain?

No, it's sex. But I love dogs as well, don't you? I wept absolutely buckets of tears when we had to put down Parker-Bowles, our 18-year-old labrador. Dogs never let you down, do they? That's what's so marvellous about them.

Can we get back to spoons please. Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

Oh yes, heaps of things.

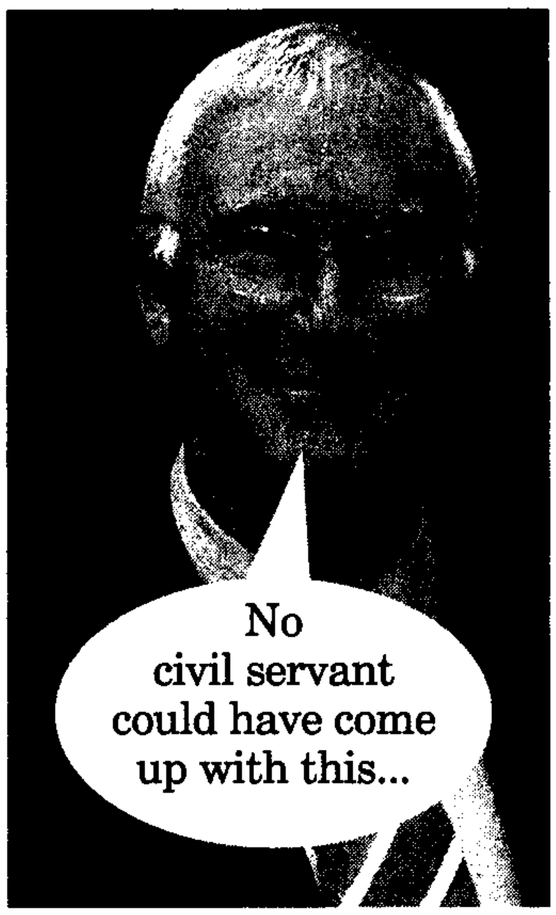
You're supposed to say 'no'.

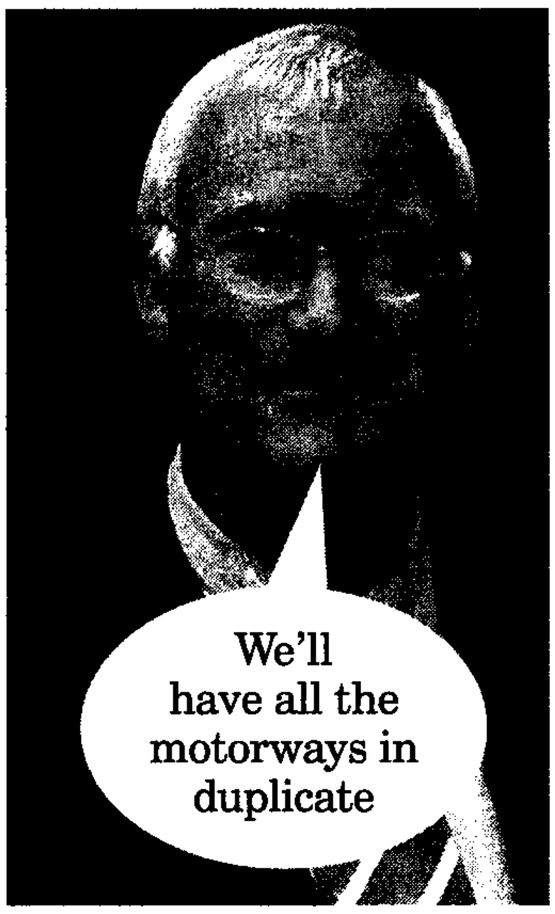
Am I? Gosh, sorry!

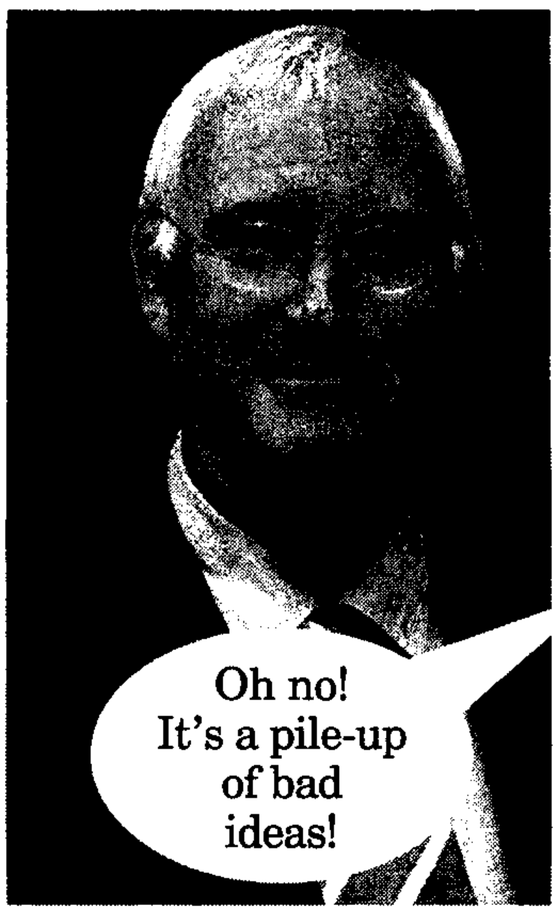
NEXT WEEK: The Bishop of Oxford — *"Me And My Thermos".*

"Comedy repeat after comedy repeat..."

BIRT'S BRILLIANT NEW PLAN







HOW THE DAILY BLACKMAIL COVERS THE BIG STORIES

Ephraim HARDCASTLE

WHAT has everyone got against Mr Richard Desmond, the proprietor of the Daily Express? He has always struck me as being a very fine fellow. A view I share, incidentally, with my proprietor Lord Rothermere. Isn't life grandy and dandy?

WHY should anyone hold it against Mr Tony Blair that he should have accepted a large cheque from Richard Desmond, the man known in Fleet Street as "Clean Des". I certainly know of nothing untoward about Mr Desmond and nor does my proprietor, Lord Rothermere.

I have received an amusing letter from none other than my good friend Mr Desmond. He writes "Watch your step, McKay. Another squeak from anyone on the Mail, and I will blow the gaffe on your boss's love child. By the way, I know where you both live."

What a wag he is! (And certainly not a pornographer, as some downmarket rags would have us believe!)

On Other Pages

NIGEL DEMPSTER: Richard Desmond is a saintly figure, Lord Rothermere tells me (World Exclusive) **3**

MELANIE PHILLIPS: Why pornography is sometimes quite acceptable **10**

UNFUNNY CARTOON by Dirty Mac **94**

PAUL DACRE, Editor of Britain's most fearless campaigning newspaper, "Why I will never be silenced" (except when Lady Rothermere is upset by stories of her husband's legover appearing in the Daily Express) **20**

THE JUBILEE YEAR

DUNCAN COUGH GETS NICE

by Our Political Staff **Meg O'Zone**

WESTMINSTER was rocked to its foundations yesterday when Iain Duncan Cough unveiled his new look for the Tory Party.

Speaking to a hand-picked audience of Asian teenagers at a school in East London, Cough spelled out his five-point plan to win back at least two seats at the next election.

"People often ask me," he said, "what the Conservative Party stands for. My answer is simple. I have no idea. But if it did stand for something, which in an ideal world it ought to, I want to make it absolutely clear that it would probably stand for the following:

1. **Be nice to everyone, regardless of colour, creed, gender or postcode.**
2. **Being photographed at least once a day next to some Asians. This is very important, as it shows that you are going to be nice to people regardless of colour, creed, inside leg measurement or grapefruit segments.**
3. **Our focus groups tell us that there is something called the World Cup coming up, and a lot of people are very interested in it. So it has been decided that I should be photographed kicking a ball about, preferably with some young darkies. Oops, have I said the wrong thing?**
4. **We must be nice to everyone except members of the Tory Party who are not nice to everyone. And in that case we must not be nice to them, but we must be very, very un-nice to show that we are really nice.**
5. **Has anyone got any strepsils?"**

Mr Duncan Cough then unveiled a huge poster proclaiming his Party's new election-winning slogan 'When The Cough Gets Going, The Going Gets Cough.'

YES! IT'S WORLD WAR FEVER

by Our Sports Staff **India Nightmare** and **William Kashmir**

ONLY A few days to go now before the big match kicks off, and the Eye's team will be there to bring you up-to-the-minute reports of the bombs as they go off.

Nuclear Bombay

The two teams are evenly matched, with India having a slight edge with numerical depth and playing a 4-2-4 megaton formation.

Pakistan should not be dismissed, possessing an impressive strike force and having been engaged in a long build-up to this final to end all finals.

Group of Total Death

Says Pakistan's manager, General Mustapha War, "We can go all the way to Delhi and wipe them out."

His Indian counterpart, Mr Rajpayload, replied "We are going to take the Pakistanis out. We are going to take no prisoners. They think it's all over – it is going to be now for everybody."

SUN ARTLINE

PICASSO V. MATISSE YOU CHOOSE

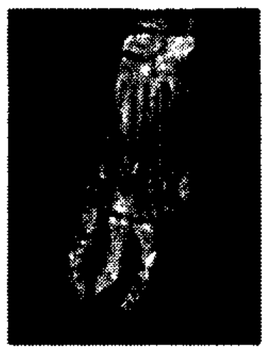
Now every Sun reader has the chance to vote on what has become the hottest issue in Britain today. Who do you rate – the bald Spanish sex fiend, or the old French bloke with the glasses and beard?

Just ring 0898 4444777
(Calls charged at £1 a second)

OVERHERE, OVERSEXED, AND OVERPAID
UP FOR GRABS WITH MADONNA
WYNDHAMS THEATRE
WHO WANTS A TICKET?
WE PAID £500 FOR TICKETS AND SHE DOESNT EVEN SING!
IF NO ONE COMES, I'M PAID TO THROW PEOPLE IN
IT'S BOLLOCKS RIGHT?
NO, IT'S POLLOCKS! IT'S ABOUT SELLING A PAINTING BY JACKSON POLLOCK
ALL THE CAST USE MOBILES TO TALK TO EACH OTHER
IS THERE A PERSONAL TRAINER IN THE HOUSE?
OK! TURN OFF YOUR PHONES! AN' CRITICAL FACULTIES! AND NO CAMERAS OR WE KILL YOU!
I'M MAD ABOUT MADONNA! MADONNA HER, YOU UNDERSTAND?
EXIT
BAR
DO YOU THINK SHE HAS BOTOXED HER LINES?
HI! I'M ON THE STAGE
A DILDO (SNIGGER)
YAWN!
!!!*!
IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT ON THE DYKE
NO, I SAID IT'S A CON! NOT SHE'S AN ICON!
TITTER! TITTER!
IF IT'S ABOUT GETTING BUMS ON SEATS, THERE ARE PLENTY IN HERE TONIGHT
I AUDITIONED FOR A TICKET, BUT THEY TURNED ME DOWN
BREASTS ARE IN AND OUT, THIS YEAR I SEE
69
WELL, AT LEAST SHE'S NOT MIMING
RAVE!
LUVVIES LABOUR LOST
HEATH

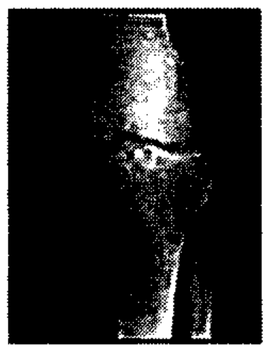
World Cup 2002 Official Sticker Collection

Beckham


Gerrard

Neville

Dyer


Butt

Murphy

ENGLAND

POLLY FILLER ON THE WORLD CUP

OH no! It's the event I've been dreading for the last four years, when the useless Simon goes into purdah for weeks, locks himself in a darkened room with the TV and only emerges to refill his beer belly with lager.

Yes, it's the World Cup – when men all over the world challenge each other for the Cup of being the most selfish and insensitive creatures on the planet.

And it's not just Simon – the toddler Charlie is beginning to display decidedly useless qualities as well – refusing to change out of his England shirt when he goes to bed and kicking the Nigerian au pair (!) on the grounds that they are going to knock us out of the Group of Death! Really – Men! They're just like toddlers, even the toddlers!

But I'll tell you what really gets on the Filler nerves – the thought of all the work we women will have to do to allow the male of the species (Homo stupidens!) to gorge themselves on the Football Fest – I've been wearing myself out explaining to the au pair how to use the washing machine and photo-copying the A-Z so the hopeless girl can do the school run without ending up in Lagos!

LOOK – don't get me wrong! I love football. Beckham's legs! Mmmm! Cuddly little Michael Owen! Bless! And all the other good-looking ones whose names I can't remember! Yummy!! But no one in their right minds (ie, women) would want to watch more than a minute of it.

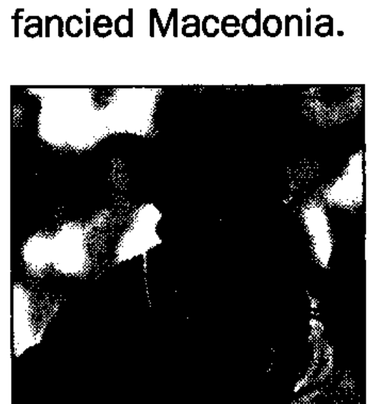
That's why I'm booking a holiday in Dubai for the duration, where I will shop for shoes and pamper myself with a few expensive beauty treatments.

That'll teach men like Simon to be so selfish!

© Polly Filler.

Six To Watch

Your guide to the key players who will make World Cup 2002 the greatest sporting event in the history of the universe.

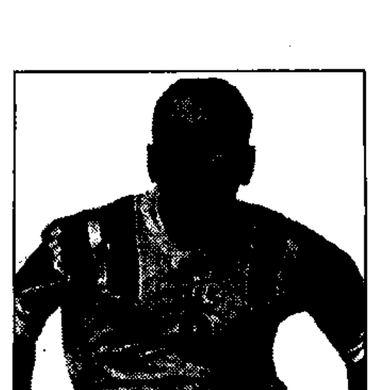


Evostick

Serbia's No. 3 shirt, this giant defender has been sent off 27 times and is currently on trial for war crimes at the Hague. He hopes to be available if Serbia come top of the Group of Death including Bosnia, Croatia and the little-fancied Macedonia.

M'Bargo Machete

Rumbabwe's dangerous "General of the Midfield", Machete is a veteran of numerous campaigns (none of them to do with football) and is justly feared throughout Africa.



Kik Ohn Gol

North Korea's No. 5 shirt, the man they call the maestro of the back four. He is his nation's top goal-scorer with 498 own goals to his name. He is expected to be executed after the Quarter Finals.

Bishop Asil Nadir

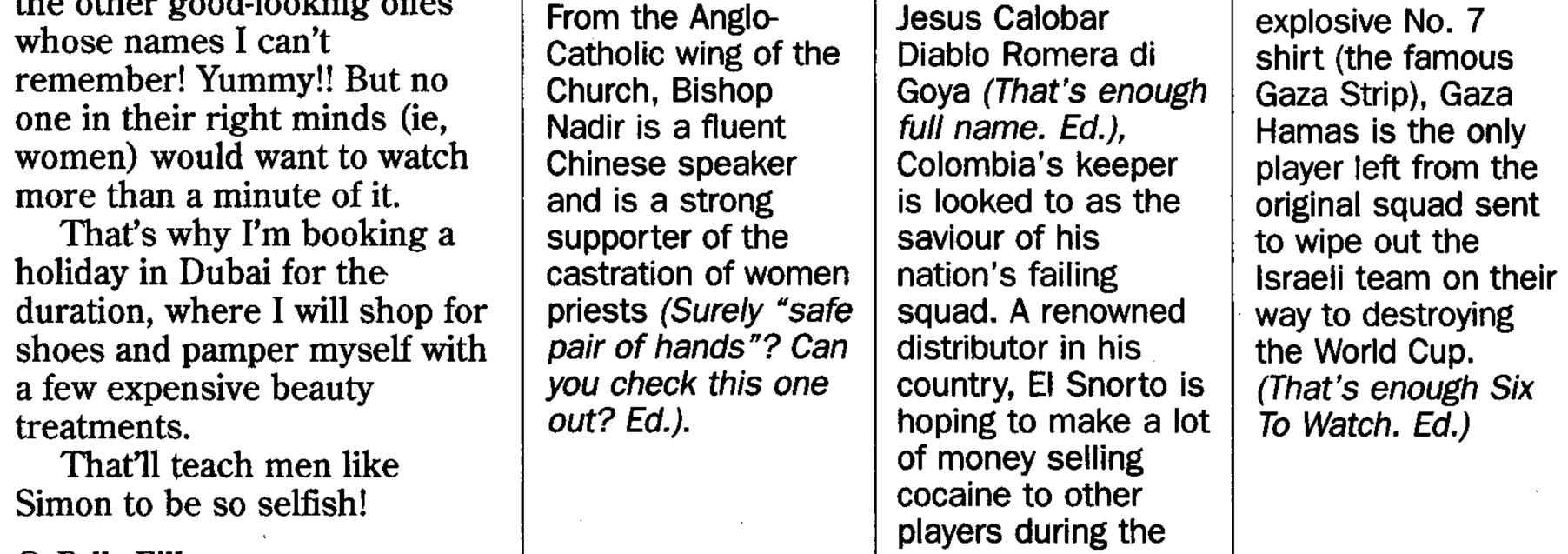
From the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church, Bishop Nadir is a fluent Chinese speaker and is a strong supporter of the castration of women priests *(Surely "safe pair of hands"? Can you check this one out? Ed.).*

El Snorto

Full name Carlo y Jesus Calobar Diablo Romera di Goya *(That's enough full name. Ed.),* Colombia's keeper is looked to as the saviour of his nation's failing squad. A renowned distributor in his country, El Snorto is hoping to make a lot of money selling cocaine to other players during the finals.

Gaza

Palestine's explosive No. 7 shirt (the famous Gaza Strip), Gaza Hamas is the only player left from the original squad sent to wipe out the Israeli team on their way to destroying the World Cup. *(That's enough Six To Watch. Ed.)*


the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOD
I SUPPOSE WITH ALL OUR INJURY WORRIES ME NOT BEING 100% IS A BIT OF A PROBLEM...
BUT WHEN YOU'RE SO FAR AWAY FROM THE U.K. GETTING THE RIGHT TREATMENT ISN'T THAT EASY...
BOY. WHAT A HANGOVER
HOW THE HELL ARE WE SUPPOSED TO FIND A PROPER GREASY SPOON AROUND HERE?

DEAYTONGATE

THE VICE GIRL WHO TRAPS THE STARS IN HER WEB OF SHAME

REBEKAH WADE is the highly-paid give-her-a-call girl who lures celebrities to their doom and feels no shame at destroying their lives.

"Yes, I admit it," says Rebekah. "I use cheques to screw these people and I have no regrets. It is fun, I enjoy it and so do they. Except they don't."

Here is the list of top sordid conquests that Cheqsy Rebekah has had between the sheets of her newspaper.

1. **Angus Deayton** *(TV's Mr Bonk)*
2. **Fabien Barthez** *(Man U's Man Between The Bed Posts)*
3. **Dwight Yorke** *(another footballer)*
4. **Er...**
5. **That's it.**

And this is just the tip of the iceberg. Rebekah has also screwed members of the Royal Family and hundreds of Britain's most dangerous paediatricians who have rightfully had their houses burned down. *(That's enough filth. Ed.)*

Why This High Profile Figure Is A Disgraceful Example To The Nation's Youth

by **Stephen Glovechild**

HE IS an immensely powerful figure in the media who commands the attention of millions of regular readers. He earns huge sums of money from the Daily Mail which criticises celebrities and salaciously dwells on their personal failings.

Yet his own life is a tawdry mess. Love Rat Lord Rothermere sensationally fathered an illegitimate love child 13 years ago, which hardly sits with his smug moralising and his so-called family newspaper values... Hang on... what am I saying? Please don't sack me, Your Lordship – here's another piece about TV's Angus instead *(cont. p. 94)*

THE SUN SAYS

THIS MAN is a disgrace. He is a serial love rat who exploits his position in television to seduce Asian babes who don't know any better. He has betrayed his various families and, with a track record like his, he will no doubt behave even worse in the future. He has made millions from the sufferings of other celebrities. And now it is the turn of Rupert Murdoch to have nothing written about him and his private life. God bless you, Mr Murdoch. Can I keep my job, please?

David Yellow,
c/o The Sun
(shinesoutofthediggersbum)

Dirty Des Not To Face Music Over Vice Girl Shame

THE OWNER of the Daily Express, Mr Dirty Desmond, was last night under no threat of losing his job after *(That's enough Press Round-up)*

VOICE OF THE DAILY Moron

Joke figure caught out

NORMALLY the *Daily Mirror* would take no pleasure in a married man with young children being caught out with another woman.

But in the case of Piers Morgan one can not but laugh all the way to the bank full of money earned from share-tipping Viglen.

Media Man Is Unfaithful Drug User

Phil Nose

SOMEONE in the media has been taking cocaine and cheating on their partner. But enough of me.

The news that Angus Deayton *(cont. p.94)*

C/o Humbug Features PLC, The Daily Pot and Kettle.

SEPT 11

TERRORISTS ATTACK

SEPT 6

BUSH WARNED: TERRORISTS COULD ATTACK

MAN UP POLL FALLS OFF

by Our Political Staff **Simon "Stylites" Hoggart**

THE magician who amazed onlookers by remaining at the top of a poll for seven years finally fell to the ground yesterday.

Tony Blane is a world-famous illusionist whose tricks have delighted millions of people in Britain for nearly a decade.

But this balancing act on the poll was his most audacious stunt ever.

Said fellow magician, the Great Ali Campbell, admiringly, "He is a genius. Who else could stand on such a tiny platform for so long and then survive all that wobbling about?"

Another onlooker, a Mr G. Brown of Downing Street, said "Go on! Jump!"

"Oh great – now I'll never get back to sleep!"

SPOT THE TALIBAN

LOOK closely at this photograph. Can you see any members of the Taliban? Or Al Qaeda? Or indeed anyone else?

If you can, mark the spot with an X, and send to:

Mr Geoff Hoon, Ministry of Defence, London SW1.

He will then send a detachment of 1000 highly-trained Royal Marines to blow up everything in sight, at a cost of only £20 million.

THOMAS THE PRIVATISED TANK ENGINE

Part 94: Thomas and the Big Fib

BY THE REV. TAWDRY

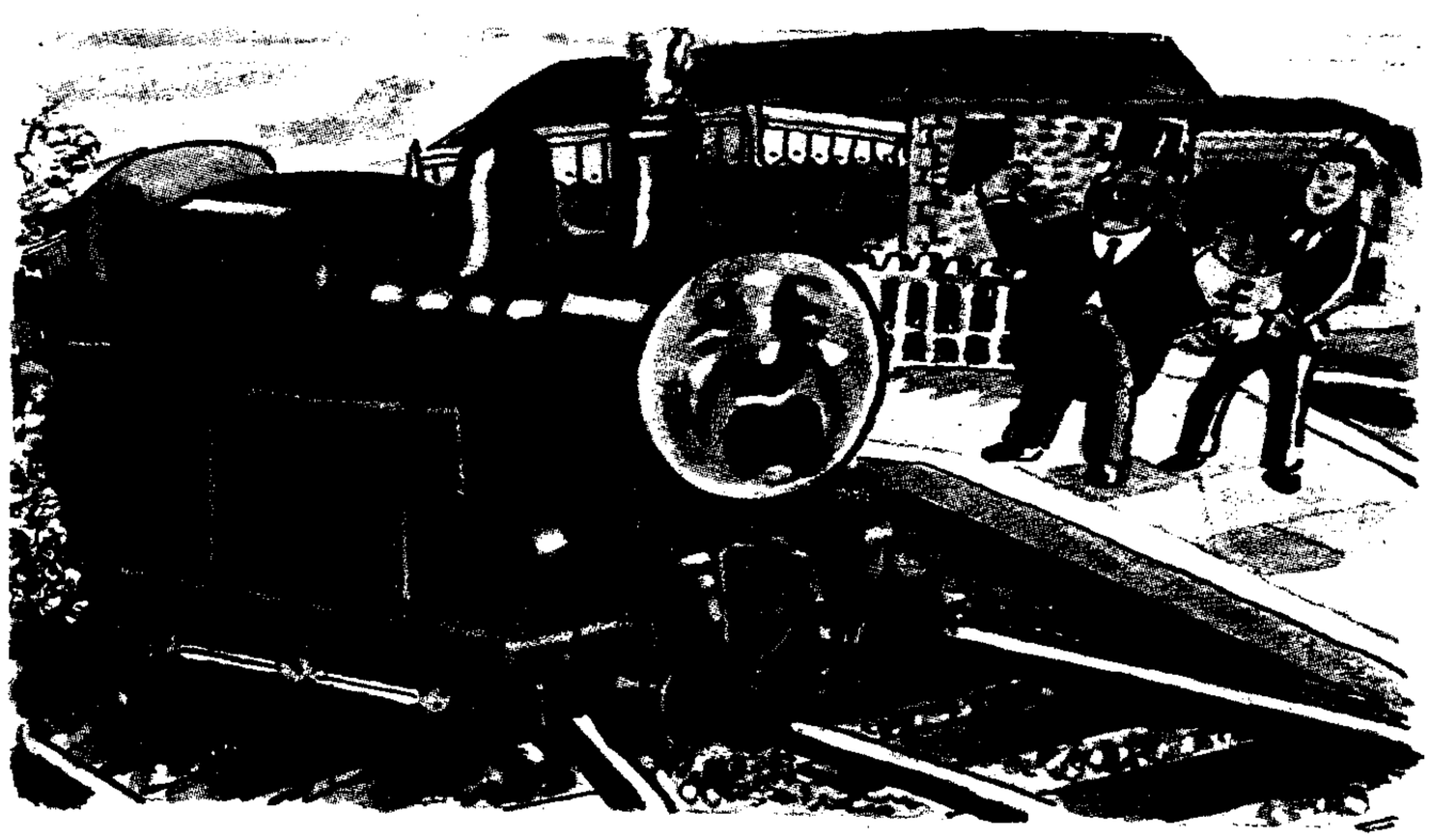
THOMAS was feeling very sad, after Gordon had gone off the rails at Potters Bar.

"I hope it won't happen to me," he told the Fat Controller, Mr Jarvis.

"Don't worry, Thomas," said the Fat Controller, going red. "It was just a case of sabotage. Not our fault at all. I mean, that's why it's not going to happen again."

"But surely," broke in Henry from the next siding, "everyone is agreed that your man forgot to put the screws back in the points?"

"I think it's time you went on a long journey, Henry," said the Fat Controller, getting very angry.



And that's why next morning Henry was sold off to Malaysian Railways, and Mr Jarvis lived happily ever after.

DIARY

DOMINICK DUNNE

As America's leading investigative recorder of the social and criminal history of our times, there's no actress I'd rather sit next to at dinner than Joan Collins. Her second husband, bearded Victorian novelist Wilkie, was an old friend of mine from way back, and her sixth husband, rock star Phil, is to appear at glamorous Queen Elizabeth II's jubilee celebrations in her prestigious parkside London mansion Buckingham Palace. At the top-rated exclusive upmarket Le Cuiller Gras restaurant on Park Avenue when Joan was in New York recently to launch her fabulous new range of high-quality scent 'Odeur du Corps', she put her gorgeously wrinkled hand on my shoulder and whispered deep into my ear, "Dominick, I have to talk to you." As she was telling me something truly astonishing about the certain involvement in the O.J. Simpson case of AWOL moustachioed English aristo Lord Lucan, which I agreed not to pass on, down the far end of our table Snow White, the deeply unhappy ageing two-bit hooker and former Disney starlet, now married to multi-billionaire plastics supremo triple-faced-lifted 87-year-old Vernon D. Vernon Jr, slumped into her cheese souffle from a shot to the head. No, the news was not good for 57-year-old thrice-married former call-girl Snow White: she was stone dead.

It was a horrible sight, White's lifeless face slap in middle of an otherwise perfect cheese souffle. "She's let herself go," whispered Joan. The autopsy report was later to confirm this view: the impact of falling into the souffle had fatally smeared Snow White's make-up, so her face had to be re-touched at considerable expense to her estate for her glamorous interment in Forest Lawn attended by media mogul Barry Diller whose four-part mini-series "Kennedy" starring Leonard Nimoy as the one-time President who faked his own assassination, co-stars Angie Dickinson, who was once married to my late wife's grandfather's god-daughter's first husband's agent, who once famously rented a Malibu beach-apartment from the late Telly Savalas.

Consummate professionals, the waiters cleared away Snow White's corpse in no time at all, re-setting her place for my old friend Elizabeth Taylor, who sadly is often late, though not as late as her former husband tragically drunk now-dead Richard Burton. But even as the conversation turned to the much-touted romance between Michael Jackson and Rose Kennedy – Rose's death is rumored not to be a barrier – I found myself troubled by that bullet to the back of Snow White's head.

Two minutes after her demise, people were saying that White had been committing suicide for years, that it was the kind of hey-look-at-me whistle-while-you-work attention-grabbing thing she would happily do three times a day just so long as someone was watching. It was just like her, they said, to position a high-velocity shotgun 15 yards away and, via an intricate web of invisible wires, secretly pull the trigger just to embarrass her fellow-guests.

As the second course came round, everybody in that restaurant had forgotten the woman who had lain slumped in her souffle only ten minutes before. The late Snow White's masterly public relations agent, Cyrus J. Bandana, highly practised in these affairs, explained to me later that the last thing his late client would have wanted was to upset the dinner-party ("I know she'll be DEVASTATED not writing a thank-you card before doing away with herself").

So he had taken the matter in hand, discreetly scooping her corpse from the table and placing it neatly in the laundry-chute while exclusive 55-dollar-a-piece topflight European liqueurs were being served on the architect-designed balcony with its luxurious parkside views, overlooking an exclusive apartment once rented by Larry King from my old friend Gloria Vanderbilt.

All was not what it seemed – or so it seemed: or was it? I looked round the dining-table, sifting suspects. Down the far end, there were seats vacated by lowlife former colleagues of Snow White from those days when she was still big. The emptiness of those seats suggested to me they had been vacated. I was later told by someone who knew someone who was told by someone who knew someone who knew what really happened that these two former colleagues – Sneezy and Dopy – had in fact retired to the restroom to indulge their seedy drug habits.

Three days later, I was phoned by Lynn Witch of Houston and the South of France, who is a personal friend of the royal family of Monaco and whose sister Wicked worked on the top-grossing Dwarf movie with Snow. "I wouldn't say this to anyone else," she told me. "But it's an open secret that Sneezy and Dopy wear stack heels."

But it was Prince Charming who aroused my deepest suspicions. He had once had his pick of all the most beautiful and famous women in Hollywood. A stormy first marriage to Goldilocks ended in an acrimonious divorce in which three different bears were cited. This was followed by a disastrous second marriage to busty lowlife former childstar Big Red Riding-Hood. A third marriage, this one to Sleeping Beauty, collapsed amidst allegations that she had cleaned out Charming's medicine cabinet before slipping into a coma. But those days were past. He was now scraping a living in two-bit roles in straight-to-video mini-series – and his fourth wife, Snow White, lay dead in a souffle.

I had known Charming for thirty years – I first met him with the third wife of Frank Sinatra, whose fourth husband was twice-married to the sixth wife of the first husband of his former wife – but I never trusted him an inch. It was the little things that did it for me. The furtive, sneaky way he blinked his eyes. His appallingly second-rate toupee. That habit he had of clicking his knuckles. They all convinced me he was the true murderer of Snow White.

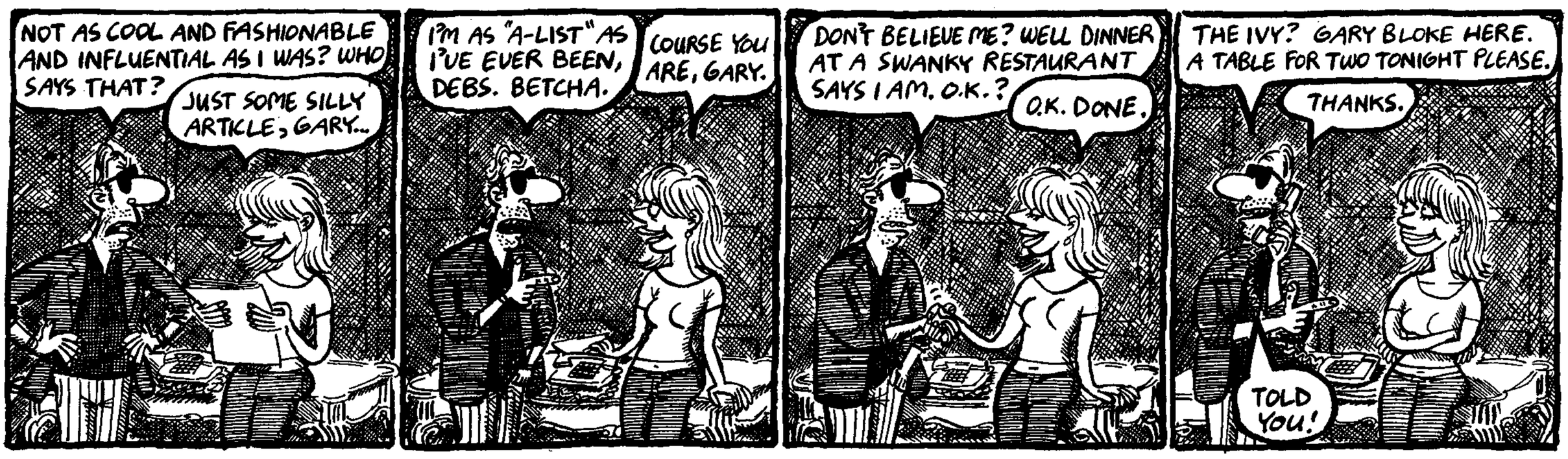
Postscript: I was later contacted by Charming's dental hygienist. She told me he gave up flossing in late May or early June 2001 – exactly a year before the brutal murder of his fifth wife. Coincidence?

I don't think so.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


NOT AS COOL AND FASHIONABLE AND INFLUENTIAL AS I WAS? WHO SAYS THAT?
JUST SOME SILLY ARTICLE, GARY...
I'M AS "A-LIST" AS I'VE EVER BEEN, DEBS. BETCHA.
COURSE YOU ARE, GARY.
DON'T BELIEVE ME? WELL DINNER AT A SWANKY RESTAURANT SAYS I AM. O.K.?
O.K. DONE.
THE IVY? GARY BLOKE HERE. A TABLE FOR TWO TONIGHT PLEASE.
THANKS.
TOLD YOU!

Literary Review

Bonded labourers

Elizabeth – Fifty Glorious Years (Jennie Bond, *Carlton Books, £20)*

Reporting Royalty (Jennie Bond, *Headline, £6.99)*

Royal – The Jubilee Edition (Robert Lacey, *Time Warner Paperbacks, £9.99)*

The Queen – Golden Jubilee Edition (Ben Pimlott, *HarperCollins, £9.99)*

Jubilee (Tim Graham, *Cassell Illustrated, £30)*

Royal Treasures – A Golden Jubilee Celebration (Jane Roberts, *Royal Collection, £40)*

The Queen's Story (Marcus Kiggell and Denys Blakeway, *Headline, £20)*

Queen and Country (William Shawcross, *BBC Worldwide, £18.99)*

Elizabeth – The Woman and the Queen (Graham Turner, *Macmillan, £18.99)*

HOW darned inconsiderate of both Princess Margaret and the Queen Mum to go and snuff it just months before the golden jubilee. Did they not realise publishers have lead times? Were they entirely unaware of literary protocol? Frankly, their sudden exits have made several eminent monarchic scribes look like *horribilis anuses*.

Poor old Ben Pimlott, for example, added an extra 140 pages to his bulging 1996 biography especially for the great day, only to find that suddenly he had to deconstruct the cultural sea change of two old ladies dying – and tacked on 200 words at the end.

At least Pimlott's not alone. Quite the contrary: with the jubilee comes a raft of special editions and timely updates, all of which are now out of date before they've even been published.

To their credit, some of the books make no pretence to be anything other than cash-ins. Jennie Bond's *Reporting Royalty* is delighted to announce on the front cover that it has been "Published for The Queen's Golden Jubilee". This is the last mention of the jubilee in the entire book, including the impressively thorough index.

It's not Bond's only contribution to the paper mountain. The BBC's royal correspondent has also put her name to a coffee-table book, one of several lavishly captioned photo-albums. Oddly enough, this tender tribute from the voice of the BBC is published by Carlton, a direct competitor.

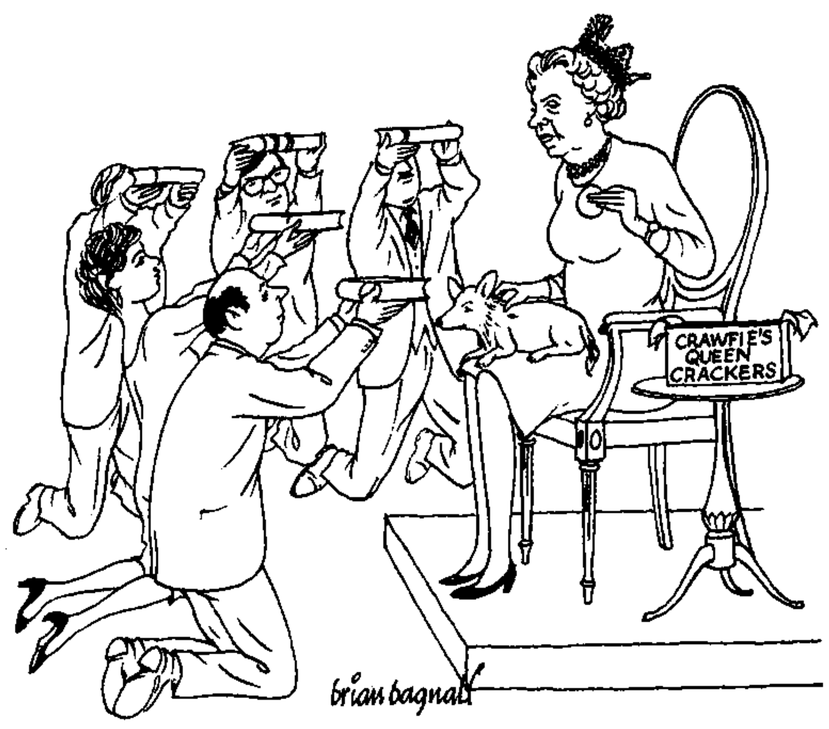
The BBC hired William Shawcross to front its three-part TV love-in, and Shawcross's TV tie-in is so unswervingly loyal it might have been written by Bond or even one of the corgis. Admittedly Shawcross must have had his hands tied by the BBC: after Martin Bashir's *Panorama* interview with Di, a fair bit of *arshlikhan* was required for the corporation to curry some much-needed royal favour.

Moving on from the glitzy mementoes, some might wish to consider the proper biographies – exhaustive tracts like Lacey's or Pimlott's where the bar starts at 500 pages and goes upwards according to perceived intellectual gravitas and pliant editors.

The beard-scratchers pontificate from on high about the nature of celebrity and the cult of sentiment, without pausing to note that their own bumper jubilee tie-ins are emblematic of both. At one point Lacey opines: "Celebrity culture stimulates imaginings which both confuse and entice certain types of psychotics." He could be describing himself.

The motives behind these "new" editions are similar too. Of his last Brenda-biog, Robert Lacey said: "I always regarded *Majesty* as self-contained, not requiring any sequel." Plainly the magnificence of the occasion has allowed for a rethink, as his own unmissable sequel, *Royal*, is in shops now.

More than any of the others, *Royal* looks at the history of jubilee celebrations, concluding that they are invariably "media-led". He compares Queen Victoria's jubilee to Elizabeth's, telling of a "flood of self-congratulatory books" and reminding us that royal reporting has always been a parasitic cavalcade of non-news and idle bluster. All this in an updated volume emblazoned with "Jubilee Edition" on the front cover!



The unfortunate comparisons continue: the Victorian royal press is chastised for "wallowing in sugary descriptions of warm family reunion". Descriptions, one presumes, such as "The weather had been balmy, with just a hint of autumn crispness, and the whole family had driven out most evenings in the Land Rovers to eat..." (R. Lacey, *Royal*, p.2).

When it comes to Dianaballs, Lacey admires an *Independent* editorial from the time: "Her death ought to start a much-needed debate about the global industry of images and words which the public both adores and loathes..." This debate does not seem to have helped much – each and every one of these jubilee books dumps more wasted words on the Diana funeral cart. Most of them pour scorn on those nasty paparazzi, a "piratical and cynical bunch of men". Only Pimlott has the grace to concede that "books between hard covers were to damage the monarchy much more than a brigade of paparazzi". His book's a softback, so presumably it doesn't count.

But aside from the meekly-wrapped hypocrisy, do these books tell us anything new about the Queen? "What's the Queen really like?" asks Jennie Bond. "The answer to it is not simple." That much is clear, as the other experts attest. She is variously described as "an enigma", "our mysterious monarch", "magical". All authors conclude that we don't really know – neither Queen nor Queen Mum has ever given a face-to-face interview and despite Bond's parting plea – "An interview in which we could hear her perspective on all that has happened would make this a very special Jubilee" – most of the experts agree that ignoring hacks like them is one reason Brenda is still in place: "It is because we have no idea what she thinks that she has succeeded."

In short, there is a limited amount that can be said about the Queen. However, since Crawfie spilled the beans in *The Little Princesses* there's been an endless supply of flunkies all-too-ready to furnish royal bloodhounds with anecdotes. These in turn are interpreted by the ratpack to suit whatever is this year's thesis. In a jubilee year, publishers will take such proposals from wherever they may come.

If you're after a truly revealing insight, try this, from Jennie Bond's earlier book. In her first few days on the job it occurs to her that "in all honesty, there wasn't much to say about this, but the newsroom wanted a piece, so I cobbled together some words." Her next assignment was little different: "To be frank, once the basic facts had been established there wasn't much more to be said." Nothing's changed: as far as the Queen is concerned, the basic facts have long been established and... there isn't much more to be said.

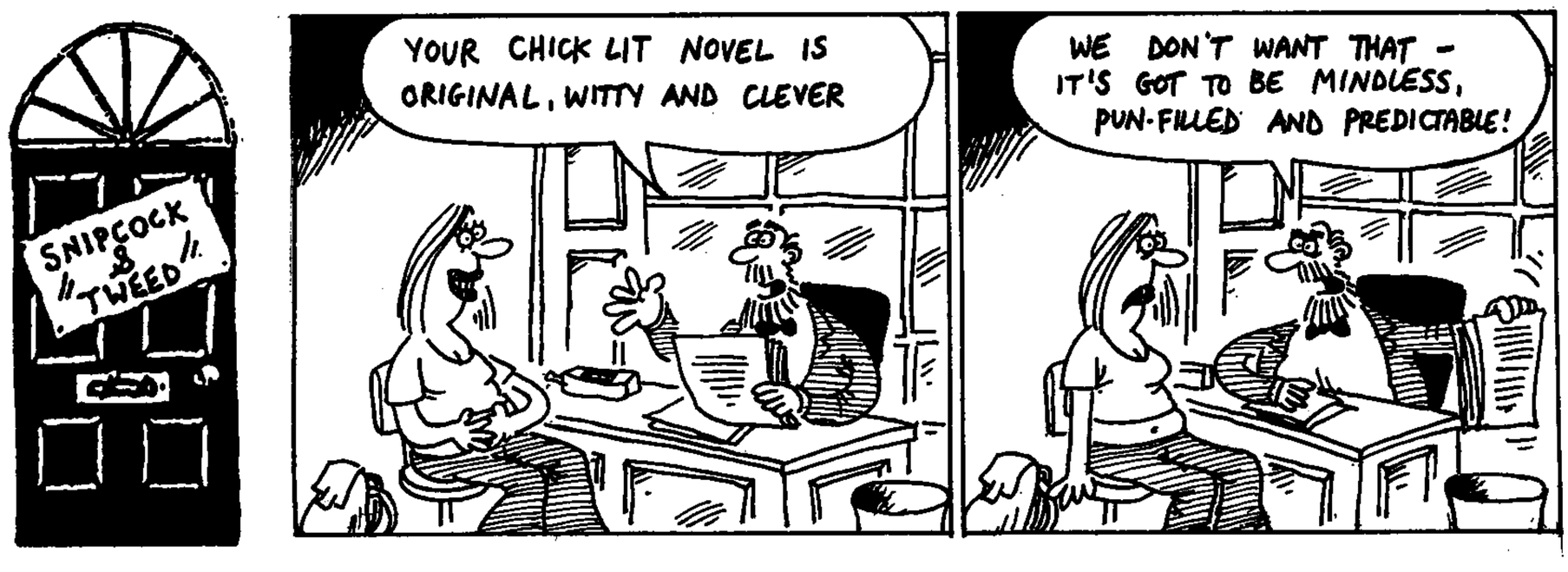
WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS, Pt 94

The Art of Travel Alain de Bottox

IT WAS hard to say exactly when winter arrived. The decline was gradual, like that of a promising young novelist into a purveyor of works of popular philosophy, inconspicuous from book to book, until the quotations from Plato and, as it might be, Aristotle, became an established relentless reality. By December the city was covered almost every day by an opaquely furtive sky, like one in a painting by Mantegna or Veronese or several other artists I have read about in works of art history. This made me feel sad. I resolved to travel to the offices of my publisher.

* * * * * *

Travel, it occurred to me as I packed the suitcase containing the publisher's advance into the taxi, harbours the essence of life. Or is it that life harbours the essence of travel? This is a tricky one, which has thankfully inspired illuminating remarks by James Joyce, Gustave Flaubert and the Marquis de Sade. Yet it cannot be denied that the art of travel seems naturally to sustain a variety of questions whose study might in a modest way contribute to an understanding of what the Greek philosophers beautifully


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
YOUR CHICK LIT NOVEL IS ORIGINAL, WITTY AND CLEVER
WE DON'T WANT THAT - IT'S GOT TO BE MINDLESS, PUN-FILLED AND PREDICTABLE!

termed *eudaimonia* or the ability to place words on paper to no particular effect.

* * * * * *

Or perhaps, I reflected as I made my quietly sorrowful way to Heathrow, there is no such thing as travel. Perhaps, in fact, it could be more aptly defined as standing still in a succession of different places. You can, as George Bernard Shaw or was it Miguel de Cervantes once put it, never tell.

* * * * * *

I have discovered, here as I prepare to touch down in the Caribbean, a most interesting man named J.K. Huysmans. Apparently he came from Belgium and wrote a most interesting book called *A Rebours*. This is about a man who is more excited by the thought of going anywhere than the actual journey. This struck me as definitely worth making a note of, as it might do for quite a long paragraph. M, looking up from her annotation of a copy of *Your Hundred Best Quotations*, which she was kindly reading on my behalf, agreed. *(That's enough travel. Ed.)*

Books & Bookmen

■ THE news that the Booker Prize, or the Man Booker Prize as it is now known, will be open to American authors from 2004 has provoked an outcry from the UK's literati.

The chair of this year's judges, Prof Lisa Jardine, has raised fears that no British writer will ever win the prize again, saying: "With someone like Roth at his best, I can't see how an Amis or McEwan would touch them."

In the midst of the row no one has mentioned what the Booker Prize Foundation, registered as a charity in January of this year, was actually set up to do.

The Booker's charitable objects are: "To promote the art of literature for the public benefit and in particular to foster and promote contemporary fiction of literary merit by awarding an annual prize for a full length novel published in English in the United Kingdom in the preceding twelve months and written by a UK, Irish or Commonwealth author."

It is amazing how quickly the Booker Prize trustees and the sponsor, stockbrokers the Man Group, have forgotten the charity's founding objectives.

■ NOW that literary agent Caradoc King has auctioned Graham Swift's new novel to Penguin for about £450,000, thus ditching Swift's long-standing publisher Picador, who will follow his inspiring example?

Step forward "Sir" Giles Gordon, agent to the gentry, and his client Barry Unsworth, whose latest novel will appear later this year under the Penguin imprint, as usual. When Penguin recently offered £100,000 for the novel-after-that, however, Sir Giles decided to "do a Caradoc" – abandoning the old publisher and inviting all and sundry to join an auction. The assumption, apparently, was that offers in the region of £300,000 would pour in.

Alas! Although Unsworth is critically admired and often tipped for the Booker, he isn't exactly a best seller, and publishers realise that even a low six-figure advance would be most unlikely to earn itself out. So far there has been not a single bid for Sir Gordon's desirable literary property.

■ SO, the world's longest-established independent publisher John Murray is no longer independent, having been bought from the family that founded it in 1768 by Hodder Headline for a rumoured £20m. How sad to think that the company is now owned, ultimately, by WH Smug, in whose shops one would search long and hard to find a John Murray book.

Predictably there was a lot of cliché in the press coverage of the takeover. The *Observer's* Robert McCrum referred to Murray's as "the carriage trade publisher"; while Nigel Reynolds in the *Daily Torygraph* described the company as "the last of London's 'gentlemen publishing houses' [sic]".

Twee handles like these paint the company as a bufferish irrelevance, which it isn't. In fact Murray's has managed to achieve bestsellers like Christopher Matthew's *Now We Are Sixty* without ruinously expensive marketing campaigns, and the company is almost guaranteed to have a book on the shortlist for the prestigious Thomas Cook travel book award each year.

One reason given by John Murray VII for selling was that the company could not compete in the crazy auctions now favoured by agents. While this is true, it would be a shame to see a Hodderised Murray imprint paying through the nose for the same old rubbish as everyone else instead of acquiring good, distinctive books comparatively cheaply, as it has done in recent years.

Viewed against spiralling advances, the Murray deal is a steal: a whole, profitable publishing company with a thriving educational division (accounting for 80 percent of the business and the main reason Hodder wanted the company) for the price of 33 two-book deals with, say, Amy Jenkins.

Will the company move into its new owner's tower block? And if so, what will happen to the company's fine old 18th century townhouse in Albemarle Street, including the fireplace in which John Murray II burned the manuscript of Lord Byron's memoirs? There is talk of handing the building to the National Trust. However, if a few Hodder Headline editors cut back on the advances they dole out to pisspoor authors, they could afford to move the whole building brick by brick to Euston Road...

■ JILLY COOPER has been revealing her current bedtime reading in the books pages of the *Sunset Times*, and she seems particularly taken with *An Innocent Eye* by Philip Hook, which she described as "a marvellous thriller".

And how she stumbled across it? "He gave me a lovely review for my new novel *Pandora* and I wrote and thanked him, so he sent me in return a copy of his own most recent book." Amazing!

'Bookworm'

Pseuds Corner

A retaining wall reminiscent of an office block divides the garden into two contrasting levels representing "Aspiration" (lower) and "Achievement" (upper). They are connected by a spiral "career" ladder ascending through the broken glass ceiling to the upper level, where the strong colours of the planting express the energy and vibrancy of a fulfilled and well-balanced workforce. From this level a cascade of water, from the computer-shaped water feature, symbolises the flow of inspiration to the pool of ideas and talent below.

The Accenture Garden: "Through the Glass Ceiling" Chelsea Flower Show

A skateboarding artist last night won Britain's most lucrative art prize. Toby Paterson, 28, collected a cheque for £24,000 from singer Bjork after winning Becks Futures 2002... Judging panel chairman Mark Francis said Paterson 'translates complex architectural motifs from the lost dreams of post-war modernism and turns them into an aesthetic and social enquiry.'

***Metro* (North-West edition)**

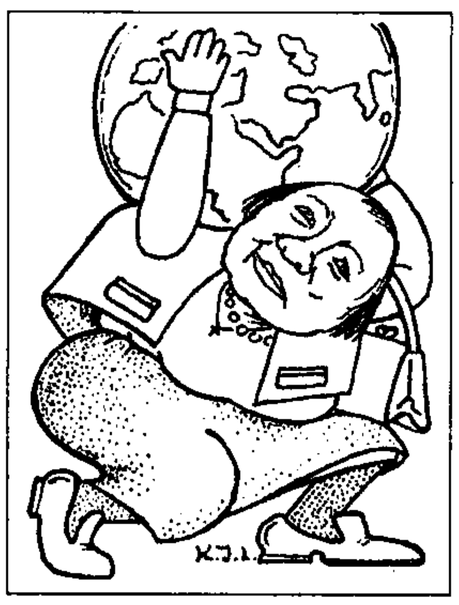
A post-doctoral position is available at Bolton Institute to explore the development of high-performance underlays from carpet waste. The work will involve processing and preparation of carpet waste into particulate form and their [*sic*] subsequent consolidation into novel underlays with vibro-acoustic properties. The work would also involve a series of standard tests applicable to both underlay and acoustic areas with the view of performance optimisation, application diversity and market acceptability.

Advertisement, the *Guardian*

Birth To Annie & Tony Rushton, 10.5.02, a girl, Lola Ruby Atalanta

Private Eye

Days in Government might be over, but there is still much to do, and Mo's energy is spent tackling the world's drug and conflict problems, amongst a million other projects...



Press release for Mo Mowlam's *Momentum*

As a joke, it fails on every level. Instead of being, in Freud's description, a discharge of energy, it instead provokes a miserable exhalation of ennui. Our expectations – far from being subverted by the punchline – are met exactly. Instead of surprising us, it bores us. The improbably cumbersome amalgam of nationalities in the carriage has no purpose whatsoever other than to lead us, by laborious dot-to-dot, to the dismal punchline.

ROB LIDDLE analyses the Ann Winterton 'joke', the *Guardian*

Pseuds Corporate

The logo

BRITISH COUNCIL LearnEnglish

Our name changes from The British Council to British Council. (We still refer to 'the British Council' in phrases such as 'I work for the British Council.') The logotype is written in a modified form of Bliss, a typeface drawn by British typographer Jeremy Tankard. The four dots symbolise both the four countries which make up the United Kingdom and our approach, which is to bring people together to share skills, ideas and experience.

Launching the new identity

The new identity is an interesting case study with positive messages about UK design. For example, our decision to commission a bespoke font from a British typographer in character sets other than English is unusual. You may want to consider organising a workshop on brand identities for the twenty-first century and including our own identity as a case study... (continues)

British Council News

CONTRIBUTORS: Mathew Purver, Danny Langley, Anthony Sheffield, Robert Wilson, Ros Atkins, Michael Smith, Anon.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

MAPELEY SYRUP

ONE of the more surprising names among recent big donors to the Labour party is that of John Ritblat, unimaginably wealthy chairman and chief executive of British Land plc.

His stake in British Land and involvement in numerous vast property deals are well documented; but why so successful a property speculator should give so much money to "new" Labour is less clear. Also less well known is Mr Ritblat's association with a firm called Delancey Estates.

Delancey owned 15 percent of Mapeley, the firm that in 2001 bought all the tax and customs offices in Britain for £1bn. In 1999, billionaire Ritblat gave £100,000 to the Labour party; and not much later, in August 2000, the government announced that Mapeley, in which Mr Ritblat and his son James had a considerable interest through their £20m stake in Delancey, was the preferred bidder for the tax offices.

The sale went ahead in the spring of 2001, so Mapeley now owns and controls almost all Britain's former tax and customs offices. In the same month Delancey was sold in a management buy-out to a firm called Tribeca UK plc (now Tribeca UK Ltd), whose parent Tribeca Property Holdings Ltd is registered in the British Virgin Islands tax haven.

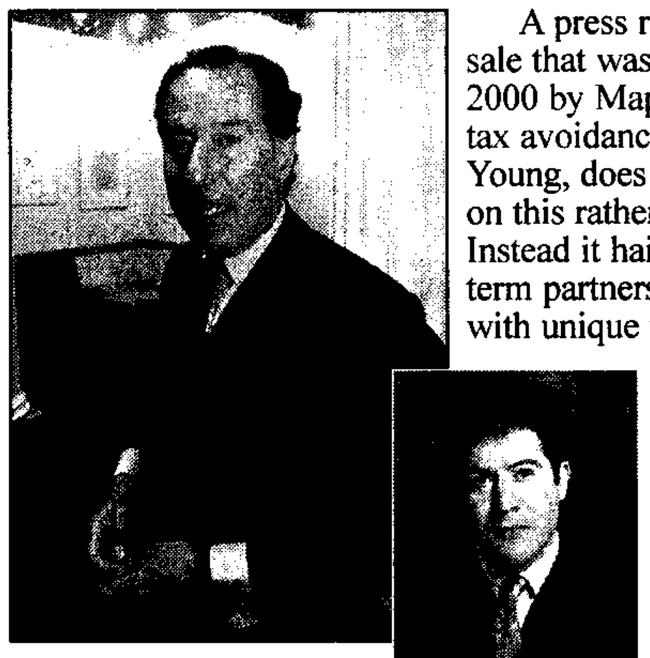
Documents outlining the buy-out disclose that the Tribeca company in the British Virgin Islands is owned by its managers: James Ritblat, the billionaire's son; Paul Goswell; Graham Emmett; and Colin Wagman. To complete the picture, a trust was set up for the benefit of the "employees" of the company, likely to be the same fortunate quartet. The probable point of the trust is to ensure that the lucky four will get income from the company free of UK tax.

The documents also stipulate that none of the managers of Tribeca Property Holdings will be directors of the British Virgin Islands company. This is a standard ruse to ensure that the company itself can't be classified as UK resident and can't therefore be liable to UK corporation tax.

Meanwhile, what has happened to Mapeley, the company that bought the tax offices? Suddenly, with a minimum of publicity, it has moved. The latest company report shows that its offices, last year in the British Virgin Islands are now in Bermuda (another tax haven). The reason for this is almost certainly an agreement between the US and the British Virgin Islands signed on 3 April. This would have allowed the US tax authorities to discover anything they want about the income of Mapeley UK Co Ltd. Bermuda has staunchly refused to sign any such agreement, and so any company registered there can keep clear of the prying eyes of the US tax authorities.

The crucial question remains. Which company actually owns Britain's tax and customs offices? Could it be another subsidiary called Mapeley STEPS Ltd? The acronym STEPS gives a clue to its purpose. It stands for "strategic transfer of estate to the private sector". Mapeley STEPS Ltd is not registered at Companies House and is therefore based somewhere offshore, no one knows where.

Another Mapeley company registered offshore has a more romantic name. It is Mapeley Columbus Ltd, presumably after the fellow who discovered America 500 years ago. Mapeley Columbus was used in another, very similar but quite separate deal to buy and lease back British office buildings. In October 2000 it signed a contract for the sale and lease back of property owned in the UK by the former building society (now a bank) Abbey National. The price paid for the buildings was £457m. Mapeley Columbus is not registered in the UK. It operates offshore. Which tax haven does it use?



John Ritblat and son

A press release trumpeting the sale that was issued on 19 October 2000 by Mapeley's accountants, tax avoidance specialists Ernst & Young, does not help its readers on this rather important point. Instead it hails the deal as "a long-term partnership of enduring value with unique features". One feature that is not frightfully unique is tax avoidance. If the properties are owned by an offshore company, whether Mapeley STEPS or Mapeley Columbus, it is notoriously easy to avoid tax on the income from them, most simply by making sure the offshore companies have a big enough debt to "cover" the UK income.

Thus does the evidence mount that the Inland Revenue and Customs, most of whose officers are engaged in an endless and increasingly futile battle against tax avoidance, have flogged off their properties to firms owned by international property speculators, including a Labour donor, whose central aim in the deal was, er, to avoid UK tax.

PS: Under the commitments to "transparency" recently given to the OECD by tax havens like Bermuda and the British Virgin Islands, it will take the Inland Revenue at least until 2006 to locate the havens sheltering the firms that bought their properties.

PPS: In the year ending 31 December 2000, Mapeley disclosed that it had paid £276,625 to its auditors in "consultancy fees" for advice almost certainly connected with the problem of getting its new properties offshore. The auditors' name may sound familiar: Arthur Andersen.

PPPS: Here's a relevant quote from chancellor Gordon Brown's budget speech in April. "To ensure fairness for taxpayers and businesses, we also must act swiftly to close tax loopholes and be vigilant against tax avoidance."

BOB-A-HOBMAN

THE government's determination to see the pensions industry properly regulated can be gauged by its appointment of a new chief executive for the occupational pensions regulatory authority (OPRA), which covers occupational and stakeholder pensions.

The man chosen to lead this important body is Tony Hobman, who spent 20 years at Barclays Bank in various departments, including marketing and customer service.

The OPRA press release announcing his appointment didn't say if his expertise in customer service covered the service provided by the bank to customers who were foolish enough to buy pensions from Barclays. Nor did it reveal Barclays Life's impressive rating in the government's "name and shame" list of firms that swindled customers in the great pensions mis-selling scandal of the 1990s. (Barclays Life was eventually removed from the list in January 1999, three years after Mr Hobman left the bank.)

The release did disclose though that in 2000 Mr Hobman became chief executive of Pro-Share, a body that championed the virtues of the stock exchange and even encouraged schoolchildren to gamble on it. And it boasted of his appointment in the same year as chief executive of Money Channel, the cable TV service set up by Adam Faith to help shareholders with their portfolios. Sadly there wasn't space to reveal that Money Channel went bust in 2001, obliging Mr Hobman to float free as a consultant until landing one of the top government jobs in regulating pensions.

Not that he will have things all his own way at OPRA. Work and pensions minister Ian McCartney has reacted to worries about firms abandoning "final salary" pension schemes in favour of cheap 'n' nasty alternatives by announcing a review of OPRA. It will be carried out by Brian Davies, former chief executive of Nationwide Building Society.

The review will look at how "the interests of members of pension schemes are safeguarded". Shortly after Mr Davies left Nationwide, the society announced that its final salary scheme for employees would be abandoned. (Luckily, though, Davies will still receive a £283,000 pension from the Nationwide.)

THE RAPE ESCAPE

A RECENT government report on rape has confirmed what many women and women's groups have long argued: it is becoming more and more difficult to secure convictions. Successful prosecutions have fallen from one in three to one in 13.

Even that depends on the victim being "lucky" enough to get into court in the first place. The study, by the inspectorates of both the police and crown prosecution service (CPS), looked at 1,741 reported attacks and found that only 28 percent resulted in a caution or charge by police. Of 230 cases referred to the CPS, fewer than half went to court.

One case highlighted was that of Louisa (not her real name), a 33-year-old woman from east London who had to overcome many hurdles before her allegations of repeated rape and abuse against her adoptive father finally got to Snaresbrook crown court. She described how the man, who was married to her sister and had taken her into his family from the age of 12, had abused her as a servant and for sex in both their native Ghana and when he later brought her to Britain.

Louisa's sister and nephew were both prepared to testify about his tyranny at home and how he had lied in statements to police about his relationship with Louisa. When she threatened to report him, he had even obtained a false death certificate from Ghana for his "real" daughter, claiming Louisa was impersonating her.

But none of this was ever put to a jury because the man's first trial on four specimen counts of rape, anal rape and indecent assault was abandoned. Initially the man's barrister had asked – and failed – to have the trial stopped for lack of evidence. It was eventually stopped after the defendant had sacked the barrister. At the recent retrial, after Louisa had given evidence for a second time and undergone lengthy cross-examination, it was the judge who decided to throw the case out for lack of evidence.

As Lisa Longstaff, a spokeswoman for Women Against Rape, put it: "In rape cases it is often one woman's word against one man's — but it is up to the police and the CPS to gather and present evidence of corroboration... Here there was evidence about the woman's credibility and the man's inconsistent statements, but the jury never heard them."

The startling prosecution statistics revealed by government inspectors prompted solicitor-general Harriet Harman to suggest there had to be improvements "to increase women's confidence in the justice system". And Vera Baird, QC and MP, said judges needed to be involved because their attitudes to rape "needed updating".

This may be part of the answer, but Longstaff adds: "There are women barristers who defend rapists. The question is whether police, prosecutors and judges, irrespective of gender, will prosecute rape. Without sanctions against those who don't there is no incentive to change."

PRISON WORKS (FOR SOME)

"I have to say that I am fundamentally opposed both in principle to the privatisation of the prison service and indeed in practice..."
— Tony Blair, shadow home secretary, 1993.

CAN this be the same Tony Blair who as prime minister has encouraged the creation of a multi-million pound private prisons industry, much of whose profits and dividends go to foreign multinationals like the controversial US Wackenhut Corrections Corporation?

Since taking office in 1997 Blair has presided over the opening of eight new (and formerly "morally repugnant") adult jails and three kiddie-jails funded under private finance initiatives (PFIs). Two more institutions are in the pipeline, mainly for women, at Ashford in Middlesex and Peterborough in Cambridgeshire.

Five more child jails are planned; an application is in to build a fourth jail on the Isle of Wight; and there are long term plans to sell up to 25 inner-city Victorian jails on lucrative development sites and build bigger replacements. All this because Blair presides over what Lord Bingham, one of our most senior judges, recently described as "one of the most punitive justice regimes in the world". So far the prison population has rocketed by almost 5,000 to a record 71,000.

Moreover, according to the probation officers' union Napo, 13,000 inmates are unconvicted and on remand; about 8,000 are junkies; two-thirds have mental illness and the average reading age is seven. Among women – the fastest growing part of the prison population, now numbering around 4,000 – the reality is even more disturbing. Hardly any are violent or a threat to society; a third are first-time offenders; half have drug problems; one in four has been in care and one in five has been a patient in a psychiatric unit.

Numbers are being swollen by the growth in automatic sentences for persistent petty offenders or people who breach probation, the jailing of feckless and hopeless parents and the removal of restrictions to stop courts remanding children in jails.

So who, other than the private correction industry, benefits? Not taxpayers. Research by Juliet Lyon at the Prison Reform Trust shows that the recent spree to build 12,000 new cell places is a staggering £1.28bn.

Group 4, which runs Altcourse Prison in Liverpool (the first PFI jail), was even able to refinance the project, securing much more favourable terms and netting an increased £10.7m return, on top of the built-in £17.5m profit, for shareholders. Under its contract with the home office, Group 4 and its partner Carillion (formerly Tarmac) didn't have to share its windfall with taxpayers who are ultimately paying for the jail.

Since this scandal was exposed, the prison service has ensured that the contracts for the two latest jails in Peterborough and Ashford will now share on a 50-50 basis any refinancing windfall.

But PFIs are proliferating elsewhere in the criminal justice system too. According to a report from the Centre for Public Services, called *Privatising Justice*, Britain now has the most privatised criminal justice system in Europe. As well as jails, police stations, courts, custody centres, probation hostels and offices, computer projects worth more than £13bn are in the pipeline, despite past examples of spiralling costs and reduced services to the public. More than £145m has been spent on consultancy fees alone – equivalent, says the report, to 5,000 new police officers or seven new publicly-funded magistrates' courts.

The report concludes that it is PFIs that are now shaping how services are delivered in the criminal justice system and limiting access to local justice.

Or as Tony Blair put it in that same 1993 speech: "I think there is a danger that if you build up an industrial vested interest into the penal system, and as part of that interest they are designed obviously to keep the prison population such that it satisfies those commercial interests, then I think there is a risk that that distorts the penal policy that otherwise you would introduce." How right he was!

A NEW BREED OF DOUBLESPEAK

ANOTHER monumental cock-up by the navy has cost the taxpayer £20m. In 1996 the ministry of defence (MoD) announced something called the Remote Ammunitioning Facility Tamar (RAFT): a massive jetty that was to be built in the river Tamar, near Saltash, where submarines could be loaded with torpedoes and other ammunition.

To make this possible the river had to be systematically and continuously dredged at vast expense and nuisance to local people. An MoD document at the time explained that the jetty was needed "to improve the safety of ammunitioning operations by combining them in a single location, remote from the [Devonport] dockyard such that in the unlikely event of an accidental explosion the effect on dockyard workers will be significantly reduced".

The plan provoked howls of protest in Saltash. DIG, Plymouth's Nuclear Dump Information Group, pointed out that the risk of an explosion was being transferred from Plymouth to Saltash because Saltash was smaller and meeker. The authorities took no notice and the dredging went ahead — until last month when the navy suddenly announced that the whole project was being junked.

The naval base commander at Devonport, Commodore Ric Cheadle, told the *Western Morning News* that according to "new research", any likely explosion from the loading of ammunition was likely to be much less severe than had previously been estimated. "If I could turn the clock back," he added helpfully, "I'd have started the weapons testing perhaps a decade ago."

The £20m cost of the preparations would just have to be "written off". Most people in the area, though relieved that RAFT has been abandoned, don't believe a word of the official explanation. They prefer two others. Either the danger of explosions has been judged less potentially expensive than the cost of the jetty; or the entire fleet of nuclear submarines is about to be moved to Faslane in Scotland (it was only based in Plymouth by the Tories because of the number of marginal seats there, to the profound irritation of Scottish Labour MPs such as Gordon Brown).

Plymouth's "new" Labour and Tory MPs, including Devonport MP Bill Jamieson, minister of shipping, had little or nothing to say about this gross waste and cock-up, perhaps because like so many others it had been started under the Tories and faithfully continued by "new" Labour. The only protest came from the Lib Dem MP for South-east Cornwall, which includes Saltash. Colin Breed described the MOD's behaviour as "shocking". He complained: "We all asked whether it was absolutely necessary, bearing in mind the environmental damage, and we were told it was vital. Now they have suddenly decided it was not needed at all. I deplore this kind of doublespeak."

This attack on doublespeak surprised at least one former Lib Dem voter in Saltash. Nick Haslam remembers going to Mr Breed's surgery in early 1999 to ask him to make representations to the MoD about RAFT and the potential damage it threatened to the environment.

Mr Haslam recalls the MP's reaction. "His reply was to the effect that the navy knew best and that he had every confidence in them, and that RAFT would bring much-needed work to the area. He refused to take any action on my requests."

DELOITTE TOUCHÉ

WHEN "Big Five" accountancy firm Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu (DTT) announced in February that it was spinning off its consulting arm Deloitte Consulting, DTT chief executive James E. Copeland Jr said the decision had been made "reluctantly" because of the problem of perception in the post-Enron era.

In a press release Copeland said: "I believe that, for our firm at least, the independence issue related to providing both auditing and consulting services is one of perception only. However, in the current environment, we cannot expose our clients to possible criticism because of the perception problem surrounding the scope of services audit firms may provide to clients."

So when it was announced in April that staff from beleaguered Andersen were to transfer to DTT, the 600 employees of Andersen's business consulting division in the UK assumed they would be working for Deloitte Consulting, and indeed were led to believe this by the decision makers. Not so. DTT has another consultancy arm, Management Solutions, about which it is remarkably quiet and which it has no intention of spinning off.

While Deloitte Consulting is dominant in the US, where the post-Enron "perception problem" is most acute, Management Solutions is bigger in Europe where it works on a national and regional, rather than global basis. In 2000 Management Solutions brought in 68 percent of DTT's total estimated consultancy sales in Europe of $1.72bn. So one of Andersen's most important European consulting units will now sit at the heart of one of the Big Five auditors... surely there can be no perception problem there?

MURPHY'S LAW?

A UNION official visiting members working on the Channel tunnel rail link to discuss dubious employment practices ended up in hospital after security guards wrestled him to the ground and beat him up.

Bryan Rye, south-east officer of builders' union UCATT, was trying to visit members at the site office at Swanscombe when he was subjected to what fellow UCATT official Ron McKay described as a "prolonged and vicious assault".

The rail link is funded by the transport department, with building work overseen by the Bechtel-led Rail Link Engineering consortium, but Swanscombe is run by Britain's Murphy and Germany's Hochtief.

When Mr Rye asked to see UCATT members there, three security guards told him there was a "problem". Ron McKay reported that "one security guard grabbed his leg, one grabbed his arm, and the other leaned on his back for 20 minutes until he passed out".

Brian Rye is convinced the assault was part of a "pre-determined decision to stop access". In a previous chaperoned visit to the site, Rail Link Engineering had agreed that workers would be directly employed on this phase of the rail link because of concern about bogus self-employment on previous work. The main purpose of such "self-employment" is for employers to avoid paying national insurance and PAYE, while workers are protected by regulations and agreements.

When Rye last visited the site, he found many workers self-employed when they should have been directly employed. They were denied paid holidays and canteen breaks, and were working 12-hour shifts.

Hochtief-Murphy says Mr Rye came on the wrong day and "became abusive and behaved in a threatening manner". He is consulting lawyers.

The picture in the last issue captioned Charles Koppel was not him at all. It was Al Gore. Sorry.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

ALL too easily in the City the legend replaces the fact, especially when there is a successful story to tell. Repeated enough times by gullible PR-fed hacks, and soon nobody bothers to question the myth. That already seems to be happening with Philip Green's takeover of Bhs two years ago.

All at once newspapers cannot get enough of the expletive-loving high street retailer. Even the *Sunday Times* and *Observer*, who jointly shelled out more than £200,000 including costs last year to get out from underneath libel actions brought by this paragon of probity, are suddenly fans.

The living large and taking charge Green has not changed much from a decade ago when he was the man the City first loved then loathed over his less than triumphant role at Amber Day and beyond, exposed by the *Eye* in details which have since been regularly plagiarised by those who now celebrate his success.

But that was all a long, long time ago. Thanks to a brilliant deal on Bhs, he now has loadsamoney – a payback dividend of £175m – and everyone loves him again. Well the fickle financial hacks at least. Green has always been good at cosying up to those who can help.

Over and over again in recent weeks excited scribblers have gushed over how much Green paid for the fast sinking Bhs chain – £200m or was it £250m – and how much of his own money he risked – £50m. As Green himself told the *Sunset Times* on 26 May: "We earned it. We put our money up." Indeed, the same paper described how Green "had spent £250m of his own money, most of it borrowed." So £175m was a fair reward for such huge risk-taking.

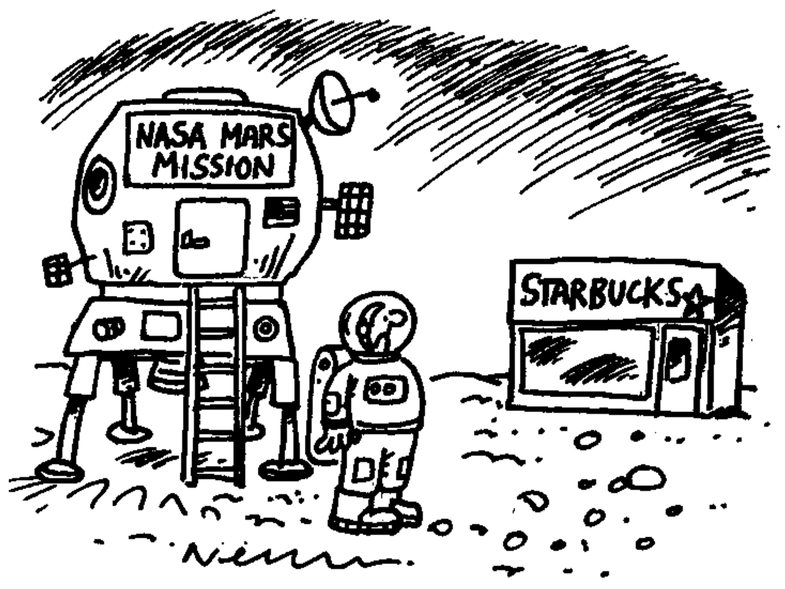
But just how big a risk was Green taking? Not as big as might be suggested, according to the accounts of Bhs Group, the special purpose vehicle initially called Measuremarket through which Green bought the ailing stores business from a desperate Storehouse in May 2000.

These reveal that the actual price paid in cash was just £82,668,000. But even that overstates the effective price paid. For so eager was Storehouse to unload the loss-making Bhs – £39m for the year before the Green takeover – that it handed over some £45m in cash among the company's gross assets valued at £750m. So the actual net cash cost to Green of the Bhs business remarkably is said to be only £37,889,000. That for a business which generated a net cash flow of £91m in the first year to March 2001 alone.

Now of course Bhs came with a load of debt which Green also assumed. There were short-term borrowings of £170m and creditors of £109m. And Green had to finance the £82.7m. A helping hand came from Barclays and WestLB. Bhs Group borrowed £94.3m short term and £115m long term. By March 2001 the short-term loan had been repaid and so had Bhs' old debts of £170m. Left outstanding at that date was £115m of borrowings to be paid back within five years.

So what did Green invest? The answer would seem to be just £20m – £19.5m via a subordinated bond which yields 8 percent to maturity within five years from a company "ultimately controlled by P. Green", plus £475,000 for Bhs Group's share capital. Which makes that £175m dividend much more than remarkable.

Green, who now lives in Monaco, is described as "the ultimate controlling party" of Bhs Group which he controls through a Jersey-based company, Global Textiles Investments. So that company will presumably receive the £164.5m he told the *Sunset Times* was his share of the £175m Bhs bonanza. As a non-resident company Global will presumably receive this bumper payout tax-free.



Whether Green will then face a tax bill of at least 25 percent or some £40m remains to be seen. A year ago Green's friends at the *Sunset Times* declared that he still pays tax in the UK despite being domiciled abroad – a claim he made first to the *Mail on Sunday* before the Bhs deal. But that of course does not stop the Bhs shares being held by an offshore family trust or Green since changing to tax exile status.

But if Green has since become non-resident for UK tax, the taxman will no doubt be paying particular attention to how much time he spends in Britain running Bhs from now on. Non-residents are allowed to spend at most an average of 90 days in any tax year over a three to four-year period and not more than 183 days in any one year. Something that could make running a large company rather difficult, it might be thought. Especially as theoretically the Revenue can ask for a diary of how many hours a non-resident actually spent in the UK in any year or longer period of the taxman's choosing.

Green says his Scottish associate Tom Hunter has a 5 percent stake in Bhs while another 1 percent is held by WestLB banker American Robin Saunders, who is a non-executive director. They shared £10.5m of the £175m dividend. According to the 2001 Bhs Group accounts, Saunders had 10,000 shares even though "Green and his immediate family had beneficial interests in 100 percent of the issued share capital". Alan Leighton and Terry Green, chairman and chief executive of Bhs itself, had the right to 200,000 and 100,000 ordinary shares in Bhs Group.

A year ago Global Textiles transferred 520,000 ordinary shares in Bhs Group to three new shareholders. Darjenna Limited in the British Virgin Islands received 320,000. Another BVI company, Lineman Holdings, received 100,000. A similar number went to West Coast Capital which gives an address in less exotic Ayrshire. This reduced Global's holding of the 1.6m ordinary to 67.5 percent. However, it still holds all the 300,000 A ordinary shares.

All of which shows what a great deal Green did on Bhs — and what a lousy deal was done by Storehouse. But the thought of such speedy and possibly tax-free riches might once again direct the treasury's attention to the non-resident loophole, despite "new" Labour's wish to encourage entrepreneurs. Especially as any £1bn sale of Bhs – the expected outcome – could produce an even larger tax-free present.

THOSE who take the view that Saudi Arabia and its leading figures, both royal and business (to the extent that these differ, which is not a lot), are no supporters of Osama bin Laden will be reassured to learn that the charity commission has effectively cleared the London-based International Development Foundation charity of any links to Al-Qaeda. The IDF has close ties to the influential bin Mahfouz family, founders of the National Commercial Bank.

French and US investigators had alleged that Khalid bin Mahfouz, forced out of NCB and still under suggested house arrest in Saudi Arabia, was close to Osama. His name and that of his son had surfaced in two other charities – Muwafaq Foundation and Blessed Relief – which the US maintains have been conduits for funding Al-Qaeda. Bin Mahfouz's departure from NCB and subsequent problems were said to be related either to that friendship and possible support or to a row with his former clients in the Saudi royal family over commissions.

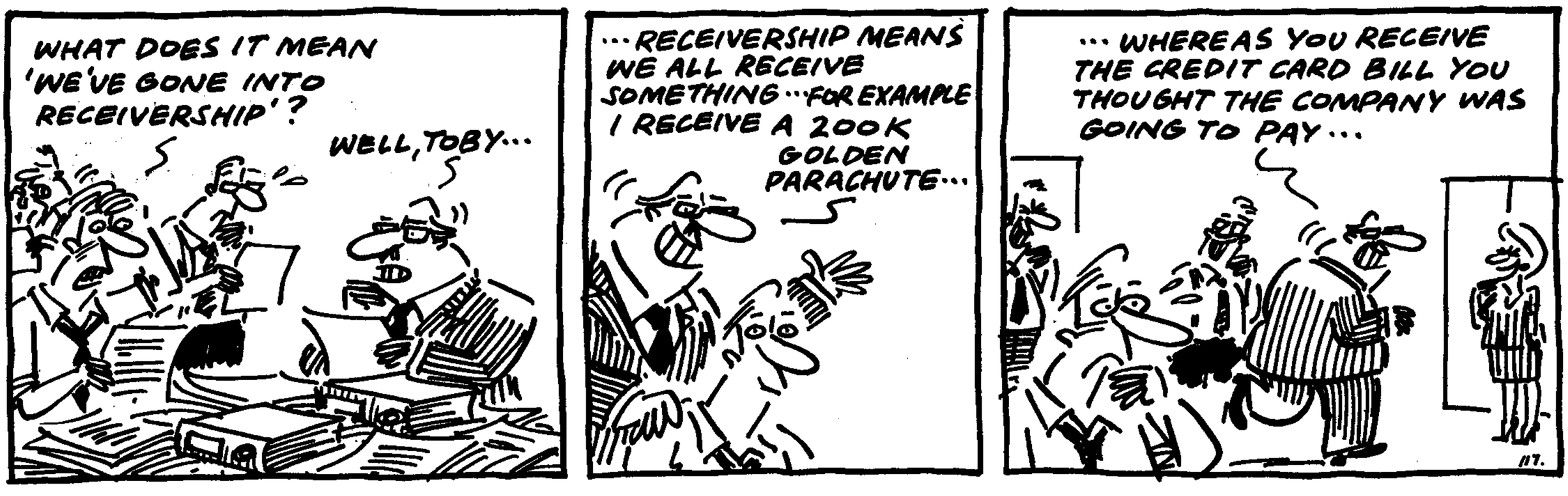
Either way post 11 September the charity commission decided to launch an investigation into IDF. This was resisted by the other members of the bin Mahfouz clan who run IDF, primarily Khalid's four brothers. The commission had to obtain a court order to obtain IDF's accounts and records. It also froze IDF's bank accounts last January.

However, all has ended happily for the bin Mahfouz family. The bank accounts were unfrozen last month and the charity commission has accepted there is no evidence of any link between IDF or its trustees and Osama bin Laden. Just some problems about record-keeping and clear audit trails for donations and payments about which the commission is giving advice.

However, whether that will satisfy those in Washington and elsewhere who still harbour dark suspicions about the extent of Saudi support for Osama is another matter.

THE DIRECTORS

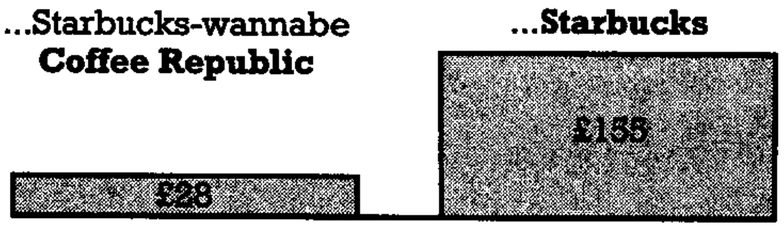
DREDGE/RIGG


WHAT DOES IT MEAN 'WE'VE GONE INTO RECEIVERSHIP'?
WELL, TOBY...
...RECEIVERSHIP MEANS WE ALL RECEIVE SOMETHING...FOR EXAMPLE I RECEIVE A 200K GOLDEN PARACHUTE...
...WHEREAS YOU RECEIVE THE CREDIT CARD BILL YOU THOUGHT THE COMPANY WAS GOING TO PAY...

Stock Horror

Mostly foam

Value of £100 invested two years ago in...



HOW is it possible to obtain $600m from top banks like WestLB, J.P. Morgan Chase, Dresdner, KBC and Fleet with documentation that doesn't withstand simple examination or routine due diligence? That is the somewhat embarrassing and costly question posed by the transatlantic fraud investigation into the brothers Narendra and Virendra Rastogi and their Allied Deals/RBG fantasy financial empire of fabricated and false metal deals.

The point to remember is that just as even oak trees start small, so giant frauds also grow from little acorns. No bank starts out lending perhaps as much as $400m, as WestLB may have done. The trick is to start small, always make the payments, build credibility, steadily increase the facility always meeting the increasing payments and then pull the plug when it is no longer possible to obtain further finance. It is a sophisticated form of "long firm fraud"; but instead of the con being on suppliers, as in the classic "LF", the victims are banks only too eager to lend to a voracious borrower willing to pay high interest and big fees.

This is what the Rastogis appear to have done. Much of the financing for their mostly non-existent overseas clients was for at most 180 days secured on bills of lading (documents giving legal title to ships' cargoes of metal). The banks were "secured" on either non-existent or duplicated cargoes or receipts from shantytown shell companies in the Far East or India with no means to pay. So to keep the game going each 180 days the banks would have to be repaid. This could be done with ever bigger loans or by loans from fresh banks lured into the scam. So the banks were repaid by their own or other banks money in a Ponzi scheme-style circular money fraud. Then the phoney customers stopped paying, leaving WestLB and others out of the outstanding last loan which will have been much bigger than the first.

The timing of the collapse earlier this month was triggered seemingly by the Rastogis' inability to recruit new banks from late last year. A number of lenders were approached but after checking backed away – unlike the existing lenders.

Just how much the banks have really lost remains to be seen. Some of the loans were syndicated so the syndicator will pay. But the banks will have earned well since 1995 when the scam started – before Viren Rastogi hired former Labour minister Jack Cunningham and Liberal Democrat peer Lord Holme as consultants.

However, questions will have to be asked about those bankers who handled the Rastogi business. Suspicions of corruption – cash, entertainment, call girls – may explain some of this naïve largesse. It certainly did with Madhav Patel who conned up to $500m from other banks with an identical scam. So identical indeed that there are those who wonder whether they are not in some way related.

'Slicker'

"As the Italians say, revenue is a dish best delivered cold," Mr Dyke told the annual Advertising Association lunch in London yesterday.

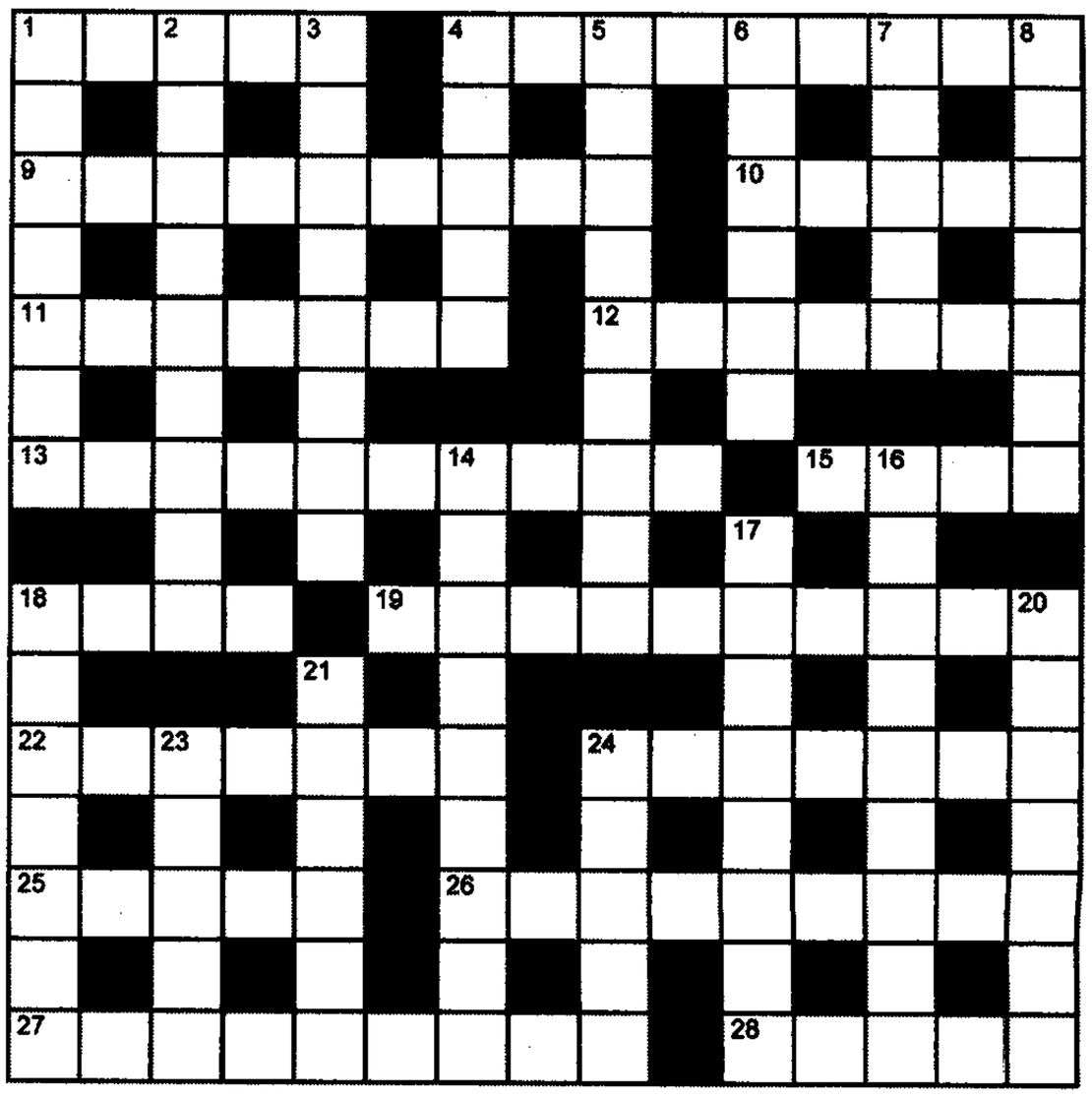
The Times

EYE CROSSWORD 210

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 7 June 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 In the same ill-spoken manner, has fought ass-holes (5)

4 "Bush left out of Open" shock (5,4)

9 Touchy quality of jiggling tits 'n' arse (9)

10 Roger's things (5)

11 Whacks initially inflamed member, taking turns (7)

12 Keep your eye on the sportsman's balls and 5 (7)

13/15 Where a babe might be found to give the President a cheeky poke, Chuck getting in on the act (10,4)

18 Frequently blind types toss off (4)

19 Often the last to get potted? Boycott's not owning (10)

22 Humiliating when 70s pop group lacking bandleader have to perform (7)

24 Dicky and you might get laid here (7)

25 Ffion tremulously touching a ball before going down (2-3)

26 Model – a natural devious crawler (9)

27 Privy to the latest article by Ken (2,3,4)

28 Snotty-nosed type's complaint? (5)

DOWN

1 Remote sound acting as a windbreaker (7)

2 Unable to perform, in need of Viagra? (3,2,2,2)

3 Is revealing chest sin? Might be (8)

4 Familiar rag man's piles (5)

5 See board member doesn't have soft cock letting go of another board member (9)

6 Copper's reserve overturned by trooper? (6)

7 Like to guzzle drink in bloomers (5)

8 About to get crude — perk up (7)

14 Illuminate and possibly lengthen 20% of penis (9)

16 No oil painting of fruit, we hear, by Savage (4,5)

17 Outside broadcast row — Roddy starts to get even dirtier (8)

18 In Knightsbridge area a greeting with long tongue (7)

20 Sword possibly adds pretentiousness to member (7)

21 Shuffle cards, opener being replaced by top of pack? Bollocks! (6)

23 Blair's *centre* Labour party leader, once abroad (5)

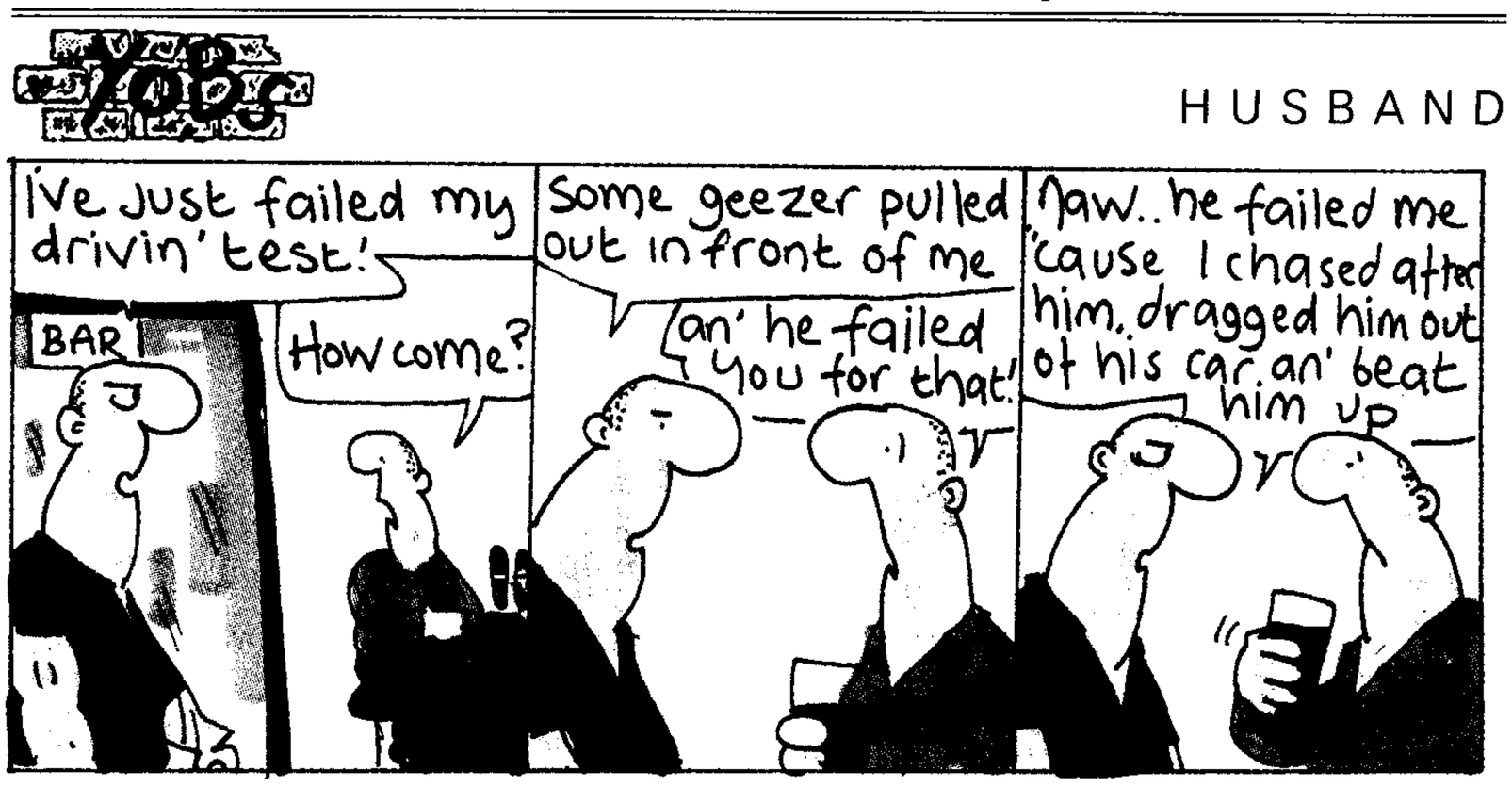
24 Could be a No. 10 cheat (5)

Crossword 209 winner: MIKE DREW

Solution to Crossword 209

ACROSS: 1 Jack-off 5 Sobered 9/12 From the cradle to the grave 10 Sniveller 11 Eat up 14 Play on 16 Embryo 18 Hogwarts 21 Excel 22 Offspring 25 Screaming abdabs 26 Trifler 27 Tossers.

DOWN: 1 Jiffs 2 Choc-ice 3 Outre 4 Free love 5 Sartre 6 Bedfellow 7 Re-entry 8 Droppings 12 The jet set 13 Royal Mail 15 Dogfight 17 Bacardi 19 Reigate 20 Bonier 23 Pubes 24 Gasps.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I've just failed my drivin' test!
BAR
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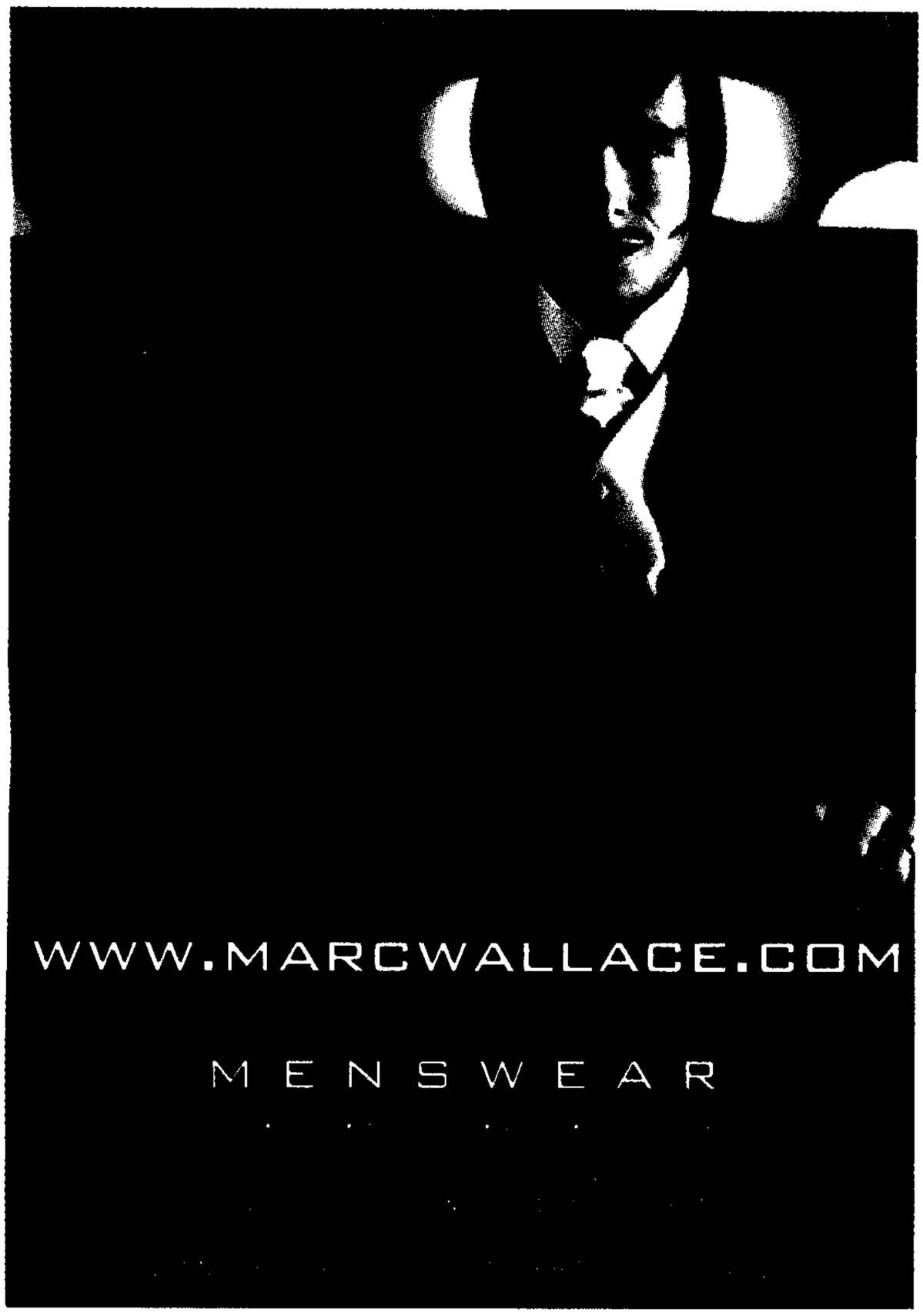

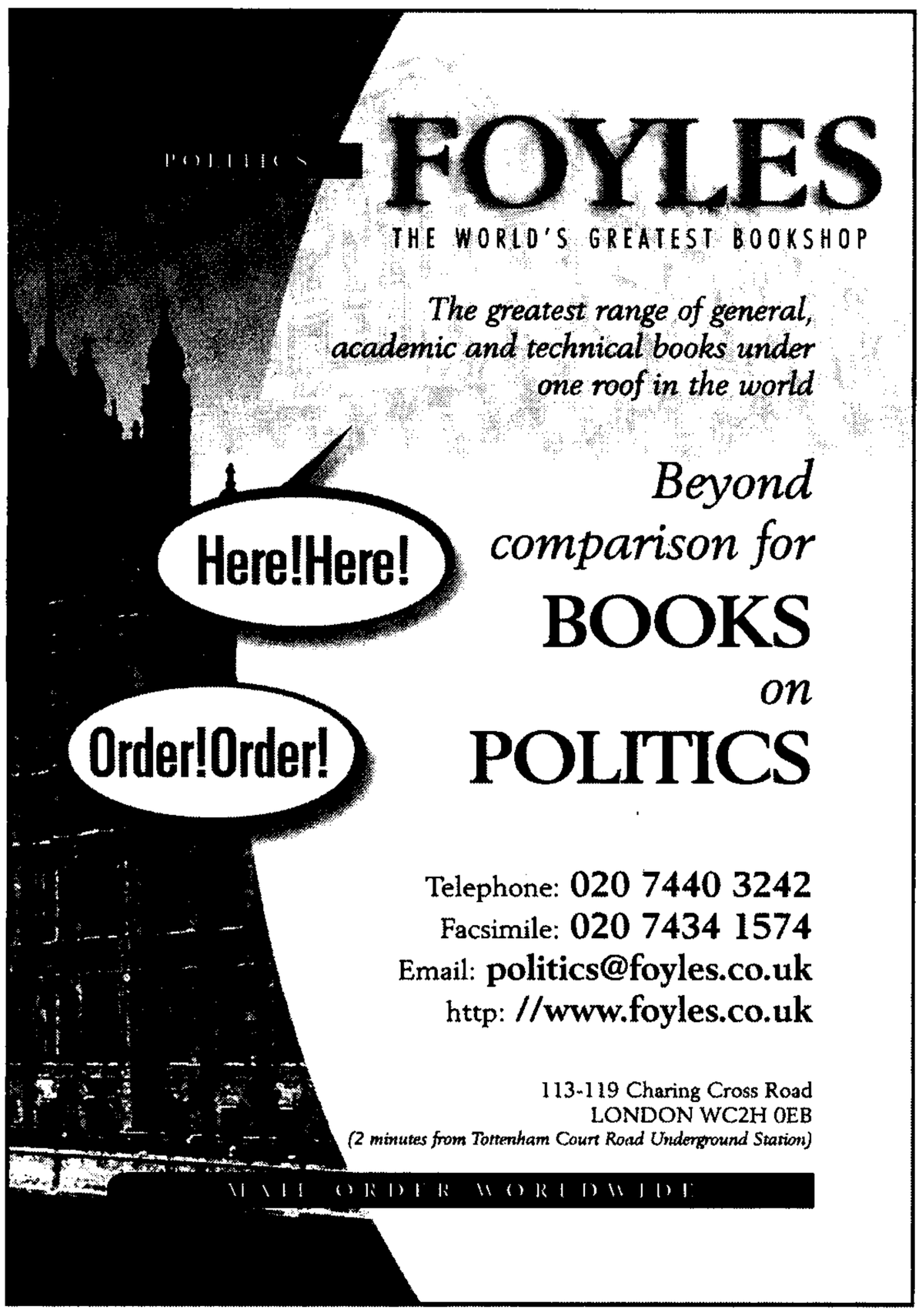

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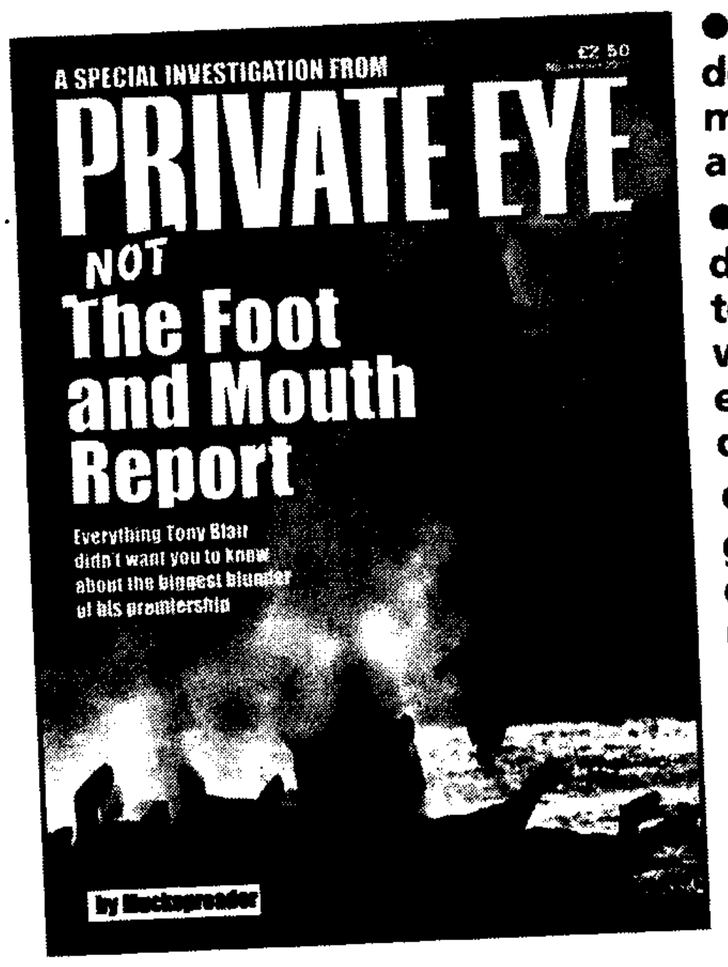
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by Mackenzie

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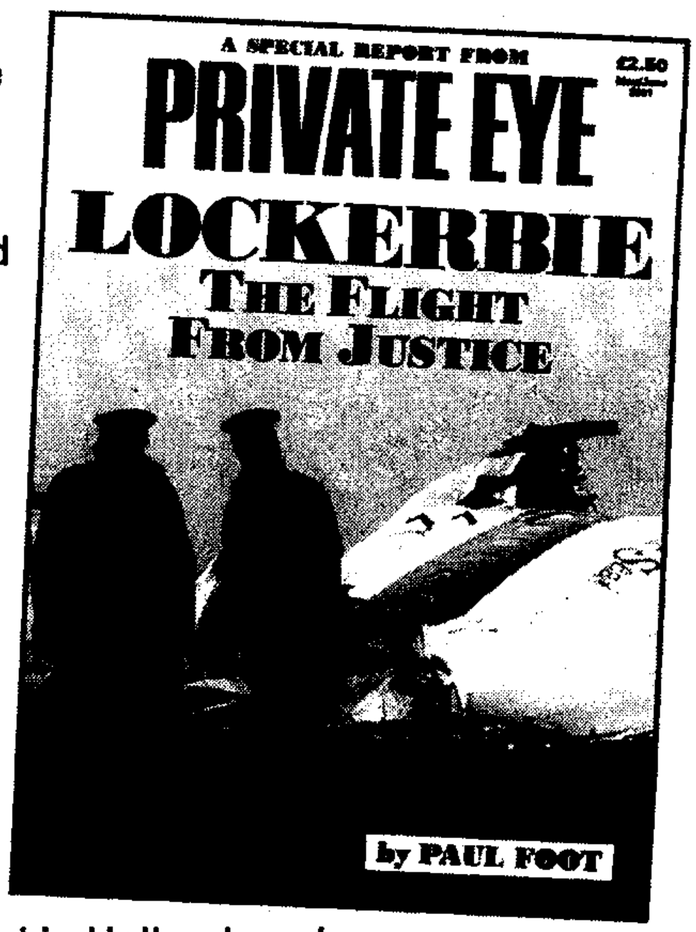

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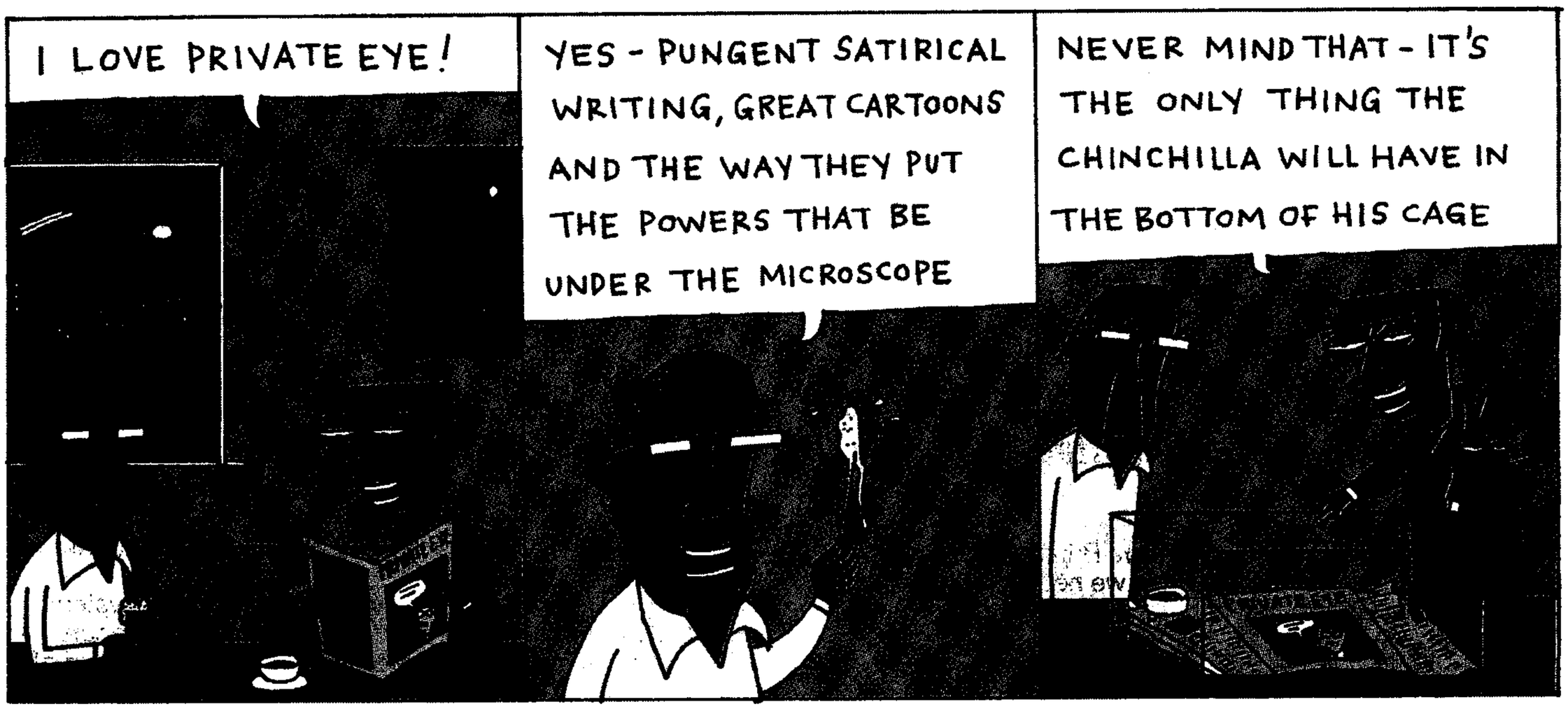
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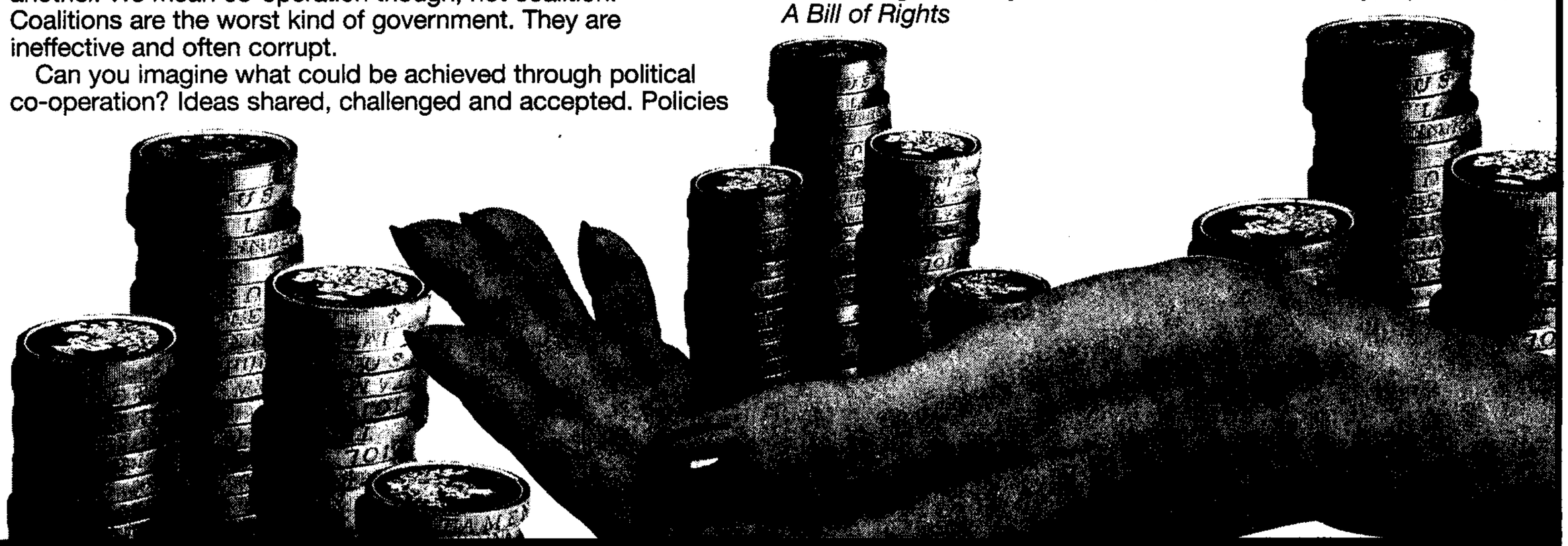

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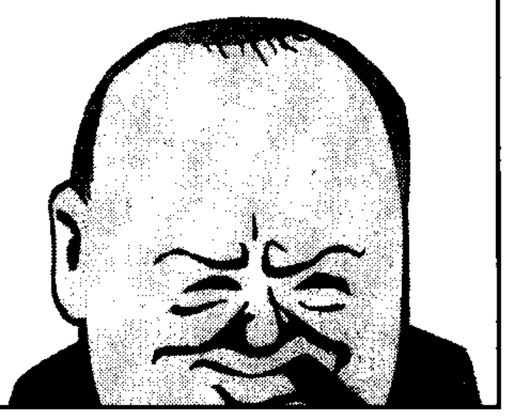

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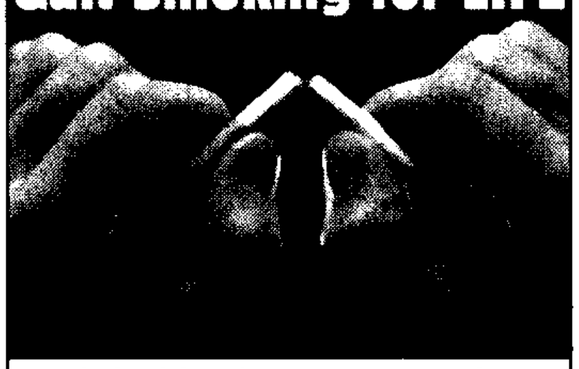

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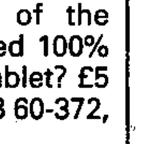

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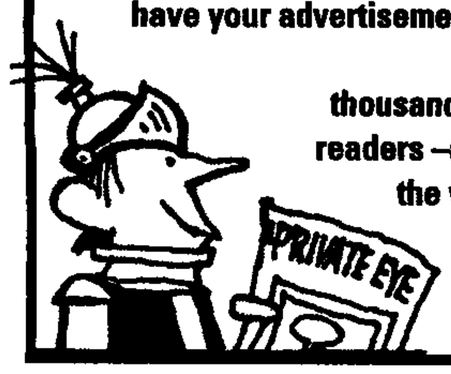

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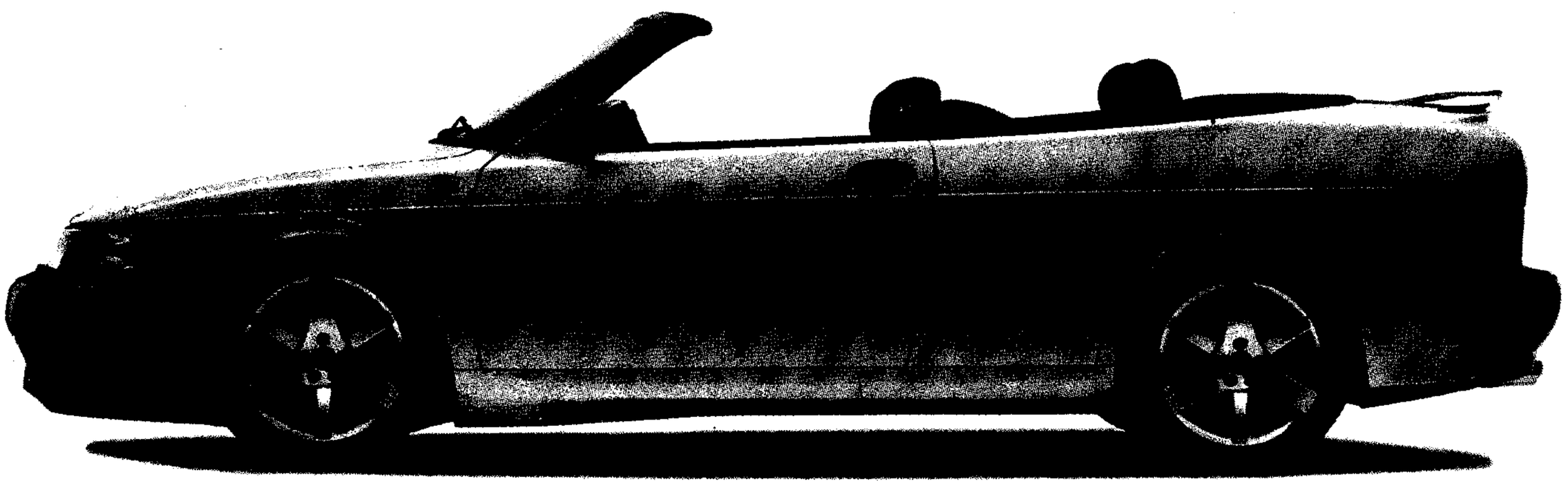

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